

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you in order to seek an exemption for Friars Way to the 2021 Sidewalks Implementation Plan. I would like to request that the matter is referred back for further input from the community. The city has worked closely with the Orchard Park/Sherwood Forest Community in the redevelopment of the Sherwood Forest P.S. site in the last few years. Both parties would benefit from additional time to consider this matter.

Currently, the proposal includes the removal of 30 mature trees – 31% of the 96 trees on the north side of Friars Way. As a current home owner on Friars Way, I am concerned about the removal for the following reasons:

Impact to the culture of the Neighbourhood

The mature trees were a big draw when we decided to buy a house in Sherwood Forest. Although I am concerned about the financial impact to the loss of our mature linden boulevard tree, I am more concerned about the unrecoverable impact to the culture of the neighbourhood. These trees are not just “trees” – they are the foundation to the culture of our neighbourhood. The neighbourhood names of “Orchard Park” and “Sherwood Forest” refer back to the heavily treed quality to our community.

These trees date back to the earliest days of our subdivision, which is about 50 years old. I will not be living long enough to enjoy the regrowth of the canopy that will be destroyed with the trees removal. The current trees are so stately and provide a canopy over our neighborhood roads. Visitors to our home often remark on the beauty of this design detail. Losing 31% of our trees will have a major cultural and aesthetic impact to our neighbourhood.

Impact to the Environment – Medway Heritage Forest

I am concerned about the increased number of hard surfaces that will replace the living infrastructure the trees provide. Where will the storm water and other surface water go? In new subdivisions, there is a man-made pond to divert the excess water. Will the storm water run into the Medway Creek, eroding the ESA over time?

Although there are other motivating factors in the report that identifies our street for this work, the removal of 31 trees contradicts the discussions on climate change and even the reForest London initiative. The intention to replace the mature trees with new ones is one solution, it is not an equivalency. If the Forest City is aiming for 34% tree canopy, why remove 31% of our trees on one street?

Livability

My husband and I lived at Colborne and Princess from 2002 – 2013. There was a sidewalk in front of our property and in the winters, we and other Londoners who lived downtown struggled to walk on the sidewalks safely as snow and ice built up over time, as the council budget on snow clearance stagnated. Although the report cites Age Friendly London and other services that promote further livability, I do not believe removing trees and adding more concrete will make our neighbourhood more livable or safer. The report does not note if there will be budgetary increases to manage the increase number of sidewalks that will need to be cleared and maintained.

As COVID has drawn long, I have seen more of my neighbours walking safely in the streets as they balance social distancing and their families' outdoor activities and wellness. For a large family of 5 or 6, it is not possible to walk together on the width of the sidewalk and social distance for others. I do not see the same numbers of walkers in Old North which has an established network of sidewalks. If I am driving my car, I am mindful to drive slower than the speed limit as there are many families and older neighbours out enjoying their treed neighbourhood and the pace of life here. I do not believe removing the trees and adding sidewalks is the only way to increase liveability in our neighbourhood.

Thank you for hearing my concerns about the upcoming Civic Works proposal.

Sincerely,
Lilianne Dang
107 Friars Way