

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Sherwood Forest Sidewalk Installation

Hello,

I hope that you are doing well!

I live in Sherwood Forest, one of the neighbourhoods scheduled to have sidewalks installed as part of 2021 street reconstructions.

Over the past few years, I have heard the opinions of many people residing in our neighbourhood. To this day, I have not come across a neighbour who is in support of sidewalk installation. I believe that the lack of enthusiasm for this project is due to several factors, primarily the loss of mature trees, an unwillingness to lose portions of front yards, and the perception that sidewalks are not necessary given the extremely low traffic through these streets (the medium traffic streets already feature sidewalks).

Naturally, it is difficult to reconcile this opposition with the city's commitment to building safe and accessible infrastructure. Many of the ongoing discussions appear to centre on two extremes, the removal of a significant number of mature trees, and the complete boycott of sidewalk installation. Given only these two options, it would appear that our community has a strong preference for protecting the trees. One major argument is that the trees provide more value in air quality, shade and positive impacts on mental health, than sidewalks do on safety. However, even the validity of the argument on traffic safety has to be put into perspective. Tree removal makes streets appear wider and can often promote higher vehicle speeds and decrease pedestrian safety at intersections; the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario's Pedestrian Death Review notes that pedestrian-vehicle collisions are most likely to occur at crossings, where sidewalks provide no protection.

Given that residents are not inclined to give-up trees for sidewalks, and that future city regulations may mandate sidewalk installation during road reconstruction, would it be possible to discuss other compromises that residents could make in order to save their trees?

It is important to point out that when Sherwood Forest was developed in the 1960s, the neighbourhood took a very progressive and modern approach to urban planning. Greenspace and walkability were well considered, and innovations such as fully underground utilities, a rarity in Ontario at the time, implemented. Given this spirit, residents may be open to a few more... "creative" approaches to this problem. Here are just two possible ideas:

Elimination of on-street parking: with no on-street parking, sidewalks could be installed into the road, allowing enough space for vehicles in opposite directions to pass each other.

Conversion of select roadways to single-direction traffic: removing one lane of traffic on affected roads would allow sidewalks to be built into the road, while preserving street parking.

In many regions of the world, particularly in areas where urban environments are focused on pedestrian rather than vehicle traffic, such compromises are made and widely endorsed by both municipal governments and residents.

I am positive that, if put to vote, one of the above "inconveniences" of slower vehicle traffic or fewer on-street parking spaces would be selected over tree removal.

If possible, I would appreciate if this note could appear during 9 February's discussion regarding item 2.6, New Sidewalks in 2021 Infrastructure Reconstruction Projects.

Thank you and have a great day!

Jakob Wilk