

Hello Mayor Holder and Counselor Lehman,

I received the project notice for the proposed work on St Anthony Road late last week and although I understand the need to complete necessary works on the aging infrastructure, I am writing to oppose the installation of new sidewalks and to raise my concerns.

I have lived on St. Anthony Road for the last 21 years and raised two energetic boys here. I have never felt that their safety was at risk because of the lack of sidewalks.

This small neighbourhood consists of about 175 homes within 5 smaller streets tucked into the area between Riverside Drive and the Thames River. There is no destination point like a school, church or community center and the area does not facilitate a municipal bus route. The low volume of traffic is limited to the residents that live in the area, many of which are original to the subdivision.

The inclusion of sidewalks into an older neighbourhood is not the same as new construction and I have learned that the original design of this neighbourhood intentionally excluded sidewalks and street lighting.

There does not appear to be a comprehensive design plan for sidewalks in this neighbourhood, or even within this project, and the addition of sidewalks would not increase safety as suggested. The short length of sidewalk does not link anything; it goes from nowhere to nowhere. Adding sidewalks to this small stretch gives the illusion of safety in this segment, however pedestrians would have to revert to the road at the end of the section, if they even use the sidewalk at all. Speeds are currently slower as drivers expect pedestrians to be on the road and conduct themselves accordingly. In the 21 years that I have lived in this neighbourhood, I am aware of no incidents with pedestrians being struck. Adding sidewalks simply to check off a box as part of the planning process is an absolute waste of tax dollars in an already constrained budget.

If safety and accessibility is the city's concern, focus and proper engineering of Hyde Park from Riverside Drive to St Anthony would be more of a priority and a better use of tax dollars. The only controlled crossing for the entire neighborhood is at this intersection, yet Hyde Park Road lacks proper curb and gutter, positive drainage and the road condition would be an impediment to anyone with mobility issues. The vertical grade alone would make it a candidate for repair and use of limited tax dollars, and an engineering assessment would clearly prioritize this work above any unnecessary sidewalk.

Furthermore, the environmental impact of the loss of trees is of concern and does not appear to have been thoroughly reviewed. Has the city conducted even the simplest of an Environmental Assessment for the project? The notice suggests 10 trees will be cut, but this fails to address any of the mature trees in very close proximity to the work area for the sidewalk. Root damage is a certainty and would result in greater tree and vegetation loss in a short period of time. This loss will take decades to mitigate, and the character of the neighbourhood will be changed forever.

With millions of dollars being spent to combat COVID 19, it is an insult to add sidewalks where there is no proven need. It is extremely irresponsible and lacks social and economical constraint in a time when the focus should be government programs to help people through these unprecedented times. Although the city plan suggests that a sidewalk be considered when performing road works, the specific and local needs must be considered. The city plan allows for mitigation in older neighbourhoods, however, it appears that no mitigation has been considered, nor has any consultation occurred with the residents of this small neighbourhood. It would be prudent for city staff to conduct a thorough review and mitigate this unnecessary expenditure.

I understand that a petition has been circulated, and this tight knit community is unified in our position to stop the installation of the unwarranted sidewalks which are a clear waste of tax dollars.

I trust you understand the concerns raised and will carry this information forward at the city meeting. You are welcome to share my concerns with anyone involved in order to allow for reasonable and prudent spending to occur.

Regards Frank Lucente