

Dear Honourable Members of the Civic Works Committee:

I am writing in opposition to the proposal to install a sidewalk across the front of 3 homes on an 11 house cul-de-sac, being Doncaster Place, and the proposed attendant destruction of trees to accommodate it. This is a sidewalk that should not be built. It is excessive to the point of absurdity.

First of all, both the foot traffic and car traffic on this cul-de-sac are minimal. But also, as a cul-de-sac, the neighbours occupy the entire road as a mixed-use area. My own daughter scooters around in a circle on the cul-de-sac for hours a day whenever there is no snow on the ground. We had a basketball net at the end of our driveway for a while. Among neighbours, we cross the road to visit each other. We stand and talk to each other on the road. We've arranged neighbourhood parties on the cul-de-sac. In this context, the idea that people will crowd on the sidewalk is non-sensical. Why would they do that? To avoid the massive traffic flows on Doncaster Place? Overall, it is safe to say that neighbourhood residents and children will occupy the entirety of the road surface as they see fit, oblivious to the presence of a sidewalk, even if one is constructed. The presence of a sidewalk will not improve safety or usability of the public spaces on Doncaster Place one iota.

And when we consider this sidewalk in winter, and the low volume of foot traffic on Doncaster Place, this proposed sidewalk would have to be among the lowest priority sidewalks in the City in terms of winter maintenance. As a result, it would frequently be impassable in the winter months in any event. People will probably end up walking on the road in Winter anyway, which is generally maintained better and faster than sidewalks.

Overall, the idea that this proposed sidewalk will somehow enhance safety or the usability of this street is simply without foundation in fact. It is theory over reality.

And if we get into the practicalities, let's talk about the beautiful trees that add so much beauty and joy to our neighbourhood, habitat for animals, health for our community. And what about the tree the City just installed on the road allowance near my property a year or two ago? It's still a mere twig of a tree, but isn't it absurd for the City to put in a tree one year and then propose to rip it out the next? And doesn't the City of London have other, higher priorities than putting down some more concrete on an 11-house cul-de-sac?

Finally, if we are doing the storm sewers, would we not do sanitary sewers at the same time? Surely both the storm and sanitary lines went in around the same time in the 1960s when this subdivision was built out. I believe we recently re-lined the water lines to extend their life span by some number of years. What is the remaining useful life of the water lines? Are we going to be going through a major construction project in another couple of years? Or, are we putting in new storm sewers only to accommodate sidewalks and not because they are needed? In which case, not building these sidewalks means we don't need to move the storm sewers which means we can save more trees and huge amounts of money at the same time. And on the contrary, addressing only half the aged underground infrastructure now only in order to construct unwanted sidewalks seems quite wasteful and destructive. If we are going to be ripping up the whole street to accommodate a stub of a sidewalk, shouldn't we be biting the bullet and doing the sanitary and water lines while we are at it? I'm sure it would be a good opportunity for many residents to consider the state of their lateral lines, address leaks, foundation repairs, etc. I'm more than a little bit concerned that not only is the sidewalk on Doncaster Place clearly pointless and a waste of money, but even if it was useful, the entire construction project on my street will either address underground infrastructure that is perfectly fine (and if it ain't broke...), or it is intended to address only a small part of the underground infrastructure that ought to be considered for replacement and the whole project should be further developed in light of the actual best course of action for the neighbourhood. On this point, overall, I just hope this is not another case of the City installing a tree on the road allowance in front of my house one year and then proposing to rip it out the next.

In conclusion, I trust that you will take the input and views of the neighbourhood into account, including the actual context and use of our cul-de-sac, when considering the proposed project.

Yours truly,

Sheila and Will Handler