

Dear Chair and Members of the Civic Works Committee,

I am concerned about the current proposal for Friars Way / Sherwood Forest in the 2021 Infrastructure Reconstruction Projects. The current project would include a replacement to the catch basin, along with resurfacing and the installation of a sidewalk on the north side of Friars Way. In order to install the new sidewalk as part of the Renew London Construction Program, 30 trees on the north side of Friars Way will be cut down. However, the most recent plan provided by a city technologist actually shows EVERY SINGLE TREE on the north side is slated for removal. Half of the canopy will be cleaved. This is a tragedy – these trees are critical to our neighbourhood and well-being. Although there are mitigation strategies identified, such as installing new trees, a sapling and a 50 year old tree are not comparable in their productive benefits. In a Toronto study, in order to replace a 100 year old beech tree, we would need to plant 1000 saplings with a crown of 1 m across to replace that beech tree.

My house backs onto to Wonderland Road – a 4 lane arterial road. The trees filter the pollution from the road – a road which sees up to an average of 40,000 cars a day, while providing much needed shade from the sun in the summer in our urban heat island. It will have a broad impact on water quality, erosion, biodiversity, mental health and well-being: what we lose beyond the tree itself is staggering. Every tree counts.

In my conversations with fellow Londoners, no one could support the clear cutting of the trees – this is a sentiment that stretches beyond Sherwood Forest to all corners of the city. The current proposal pits trees against sidewalks. It is a not a fair bargain. It behooves the Committee to consider different approach – one that does not pit people against each other and their competing interests but one that marries both interests together. People with disabilities are not a homogenous group – they also have competing needs. A sidewalk does not guarantee safety for all.

I would like the committee to consider referring the matter back for further consultation with the community and the Environmental & Engineering Services for a design that serves all of our needs rather than simply being a blunt instrument for policy. I would like to see a context-specific design that preserves the trees while providing complete streets for accessibility, safety and active transport. The current design proposal falls short. In the **Healthy City Active London** report, street trees are integral in the design to facilitate active transportation. Are there other models and designs that we can consider, one that allows London to innovate beyond more grey and more concrete? I would be happy to see a shared road approach that privileges pedestrians and cyclists over cars with a clearly demarked path. If our biggest threat to safety is the car, then I would rather see more “punitive” approaches to the car – further speed limit reductions, street parking reduced to one side, and/or Friars Way becoming a one-way road. A combination of these methods, while preserving our trees would be a win for everyone.

Sincerely,
Lilianne Dang
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