

## **SIDEWALKS AND TREES: IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EITHER/OR**

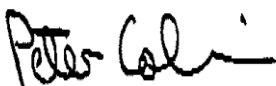
Many people complain about the hyper-polarization of politics. It is easy for people to criticise others [e.g., in the U.S.] for being extremely divided and to criticise those who reflexively disagree with their opponents, almost regardless of what is being discussed. It is harder for people to realize when they themselves are engaged in this same, zero sum game.

I'm guessing that many would agree that both the accessibility advocates as well as the environmental advocates have very good arguments [I leave these arguments to others to present]. However, because our politics has been so poisoned by this culture of needing to declare loyalty to one side or the other, we split into camps, gearing for battle with the other side. It doesn't have to be this way. There is a win-win solution if we would just slow down, think out of the box instead of feeling forced into sides or boxes, and work together and not at odds from each other.

Being a psychologist and an environmentalist, I care about trees, and about people! It is my opinion that those with mobility issues should have good access to the outdoors, also believing that we should not cut down trees in order to put in sidewalks, that each one of us has a strong moral obligation to do our part to limit climate change. **ONE POTENTIAL SOLUTION** is to make parking available on only one side of the street, make the street one way, and dedicate about a third to a half of the street width to pedestrian/wheelchair traffic. With proper signage and markings on the street [surely a much less expensive solution than building and then maintaining sidewalks], not only would trees be saved, but people with mobility issues would not have to navigate up and down driveway curves, would have a wider area in which to move, and would not have to deal with cracks and damaged sidewalks, which I am assuming happens more often than on streets. And even if there is a crack in the street, given the width of the area dedicated to pedestrians and wheelchairs, there would be a greater chance of being able to navigate around the crack, than on a sidewalk with cracks. This solution might also encourage everyone to make more use of this shared public space, and make neighbourhoods even more desirable and inviting.

With respect to my neighbourhood, Sherwood Forest, there are significant limits to how wheel chair accessible this neighbourhood could ever really be, even with a dedicated pedestrian or wheelchair lane, given its extremely hilly nature. Further, my understanding, that not one elderly person living in Sherwood Forest [and there are many] has come out in favour of needing more sidewalks [though overlapping, I appreciate that the needs of those using wheelchairs compared to some elderly individuals who have limited mobility are not necessarily identical], and in my memory, that no accidents between cars/pedestrians have occurred on these streets, speaks to the idea that the status quo is probably working. However, appreciating that perception is important even if something appears to be working, we should still strive to make it better and to make even more people comfortable, so that more people can feel that their concerns are being taken into account. On the other side, perhaps a certain amount of NIMFY [Not In My Front Yard] thinking might be part of the motivation for some in this debate, a self interested not wanting their property values, or even just the aesthetics of their property, to be impacted by a loss of front yard trees, which might also be fair enough. Regardless of these possibilities **we should not lose sight of trying to build a city known for prioritizing both the needs of those who have been historically poorly served, as well as the environment.**

I am not an engineer, leaving those details to others. However, I am certain a way can be found to accommodate both sides. If more time is needed to do this, so be it, so that we do it right.



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