

Dear Civic Works Committee,

I'm writing in support of the sidewalk plan in the City Building Policies.

Many of the letters and speakers on this issue will talk about safety, accessibility. Or mature trees, lawns being cut-off, and parking and driveways being reduced, but I want to mention a particular side-benefit of sidewalks: They bring your neighbours closer to your front steps. This leads to conversations, more opportunities to get to know your neighbours, more neighbours spending time at the front of their houses. This in turn, makes the street safer from crime. When there's more people walking and sitting out front, there's fewer opportunities for theft and vandalism.

Before I first moved to my street in 2015, one with front porches on most houses and sidewalks within a few steps of them, I didn't realize this, but within a few weeks I knew most of my neighbours just from sitting on our porch. Covid was bearable because we would chat daily from our porch with neighbours walking their dogs. Real conversations happened, not just yelling "Hello".

Now that I have kids, I know they are safer, not just because they are walking on sidewalks and not streets (especially in the winter, when they can't walk on lawns). But because there are always neighbours out there who are also watching out for them. Now I don't want to live on a street that's not pedestrian friendly.

The concerns about losing parking spots are valid. That can be a real loss. Perhaps allowing vehicles to park on the street side of the sidewalks on their driveways, and/or even sideways across a driveway would help mitigate that a little for those affected.

But on top of all the other benefits of sidewalks, they build tighter knit, safer streets.

Sincerely,

Jordan Klassen  
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