

56 Doncaster Place
London, Ontario N6G 2A5
March 16, 2021

London City Council
City of London Ontario
By Email to: councilagenda@london.ca

Dear Members of the London City Council,

My name is Lila Kari and I am writing on behalf of the residents of Doncaster Place (Sherwood Forest) to express our disappointment that the Civic Works Committee has disregarded the overwhelming desire of residents, without any acknowledgement of the matters raised in the dozens of well-informed presentations, and has voted to recommend that our low-traffic streets must cut mature roadside trees to make way for unnecessary sidewalks.

London City Council ultimately bears the responsibility for making informed and wise decisions, and this cannot be done while ignoring stakeholder input. London City Council must not ignore the citizens' issues that are now a matter of record. We ask that the subject streets be exempted from besides-the-road sidewalks, and that alternatives be developed that satisfactorily address the multiple legitimate issues raised, e.g., mature tree preservation.

I was granted delegation status at the CWC meeting of March 15, 2021, and I participated in that 4-hour meeting from beginning to end. Let me first start by saying that I was extremely disappointed, not only by the outcome of the vote, but by the way the meeting was conducted.

There were more than two dozens of presentations by stakeholders, representing altogether many hundreds of London residents, who unanimously and overwhelmingly spoke against besides-the-road sidewalks and the massive destruction of mature trees that building them would entail. The three who spoke in favour were non-residents, addressing a theoretical problem, and not considering the facts on the ground.

Several residents who spoke against sidewalks were people with disabilities. Some had never given a public presentation, but felt now compelled to do

so. Some struggled with technology, while others participated in-person, with the paper shaking in their hands from emotion. The presentations were poignant, fact-based, civil, and all explicitly stated our strong desire for inclusiveness. The arguments presented had been carefully researched, and masterfully delivered. It was obvious that many had worked for weeks on their timed speech delivery and their powerpoint presentations, as this was a matter of major significance and their lives would be irrevocably changed by the final decision. The one thing that united all resident presentations was that in their streets sidewalks were unnecessary, and the mature trees far outweighed them in value.

One would have expected at least some discussion among the CWC members, given the serious matters raised and the number of creative solutions that were proposed – meeting **all CWC objectives** –, as well as the large number of negative consequences identified in the current one-size-fits-all scorched-earth approach.

It was disappointing that even though we heard from so many stakeholders, not a single of the presented arguments was addressed, let alone discussed. In fact, the only thing that was discussed at length was a personal anecdote regarding what a CWC member thought one of their family members would want. This approach is no more scientific than basing public health policy on personal anecdotes.

Last but not least, I was disappointed to see how outdated the CWC outlook was. Seeing a raised, besides-the-road, curbed sidewalk as “the” one-size-fits-all answer to all accessibility needs is an antiquated view. In the same way old-fashioned invasive surgery is replaced in modern times by non-invasive surgeries with better outcomes, raised-curb sidewalks are replaced world over by modern non-invasive approaches, such as “Accessible Shared Streets” (Washington, D.C., 2017) with textured sidewalks for the blind and mobility impaired, the “Living Streets” solutions (Netherlands), etc.

The citizens of London deserve modern solutions. The London youth deserve not to be asked to choose between social justice and accessibility on the one hand, and their beloved trees on the other. They started their own e-petition “Save Sherwood Forest Trees”, with almost 200 signatures to date.

We request London City Council to exempt the discussed Sherwood Forest Streets from besides-the-road sidewalks (Doncaster Place being a particularly absurd case), and to adopt creative solutions that meet both accessibility and mature tree preservation needs. Win-win solutions do exist.

It is 2021!

Thank you,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lila Kari".

Lila Kari
56 Doncaster Place
London, ON, N6G 2A5

Attachment: Summary of my presentation at the March 15, 2021, CWC meeting, titled "Doncaster Place Road Reconstruction: The case for sidewalk exemption and protection of legacy trees ."

Doncaster Place CWC Presentation - Lila Kari

A 3-house orphan sidewalk on a dead-end court?

The map in Figure 1 shows that Doncaster Place is a dead-end street, with only 11 houses, a few steps away from Friar's Way. There is no traffic on Doncaster Place, except its residents, and their visitors.

Doncaster Place was specifically named in the February 2021 Report to the Civic Works Committee, as one of the “*dead-end court-style streets, that have no connecting links to other destinations,*” the report also stating that “*these types of locations are normally not considered for a new sidewalk.*”

Nevertheless, the current CWC project proposes a sidewalk on Doncaster Place. This would be a short, one-side disconnected sidewalk, going from nowhere to nowhere, and it would directly serve only 3 houses - that don't need it.

In fact, all residents of Doncaster Place signed the no-sidewalk petition “Save the Sherwood Forest Trees” that has gathered over 300 signatures. It is our view that a short, orphan, sidewalk on Doncaster Place would benefit no one. On the other hand, the existing mature trees benefit everyone.

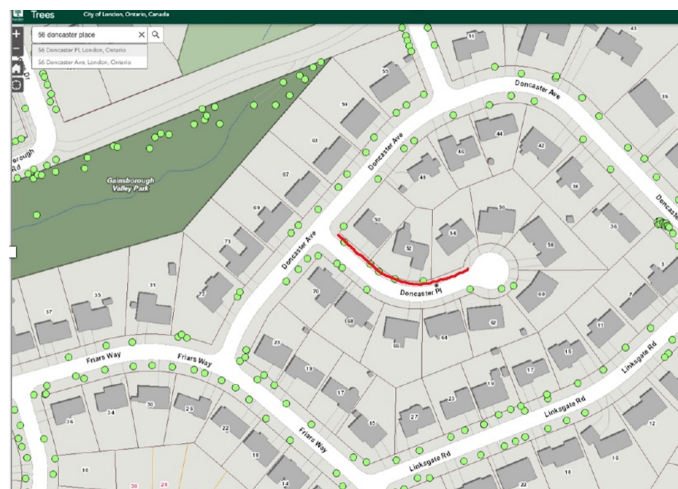


Figure 1: Doncaster Place is an 11-house cul-de-sac. The proposed orphan sidewalk (in red), from nowhere to nowhere, would serve only 3 houses.

Doncaster Place through our eyes



“[...] other areas prize their historic buildings and celebrate other aspects of their neighbourhoods, but for the residents of Sherwood Forest, it has always been our mature trees, surrounding nature, and the Medway Valley ESA. We have never encountered any issue of safety, any barrier to accessibility, or any need for a sidewalk.” [Doncaster Av. resident]

A tale of two cities: London vs. Waterloo

Let me share a personal story. A few years ago, my spouse and I accepted jobs at the University of Waterloo. However, we still have our house in London. Why?

Compare a photo of downtown London (below left), to a photo of downtown Waterloo (below, right). Where would **you** rather live? In the green, leafy, Forest City, right? So do we. In fact, even in our small social and professional circle, we know of 5 families who all work in the tech sector in Waterloo, but have houses in London. And we all have the same reason: because we love the mature, green, leafy London trees.



Planting 1 sapling for every 1 mature tree that is cut is neither a full replacement (in the short-term), nor a guaranteed replacement (in the long term). Indeed, one 2011 study showed that to fully replace a 50-cm wide tree, you would need to plant more than 1,000 saplings.

This means that replacing the 50 mature trees that would be cut down in Sherwood Forest for this project would require planting 50,000 saplings! A **better way** would be to find creative win-win solutions, that satisfy all objectives and preserve the mature trees that London is fortunate to already have.

Youth petition “Save Sherwood Forest Trees”

Our young people, who are well aware of environmental and social justice and accessibility issues, are quite clear in what they want. The Youth Petition “Save Sherwood Forest Trees,” started by a neighbourhood teen, has gathered almost 200 youth signatures to date.

In the words of a young signatory, “There must be a **better way** without the need to remove beautiful, mature trees... **find one!!**”

This is what our youth want. We are entrusted with **their** legacy trees and we must find a way to preserve them.

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Petition details Comments Updates

Save Sherwood Forest Trees (Youth Petition)

191 have signed. Let's get to 200!

First name
Last name
Email
Kitchener, N2B
Canada

Display my name and comment on this petition

[Sign this petition](#)

Lori Watt started this petition to London Civic Works Committee

Petition Summary and Background Friars Way, Doncaster Place, Doncaster Place, and Abbey Rise

What all Londoners want

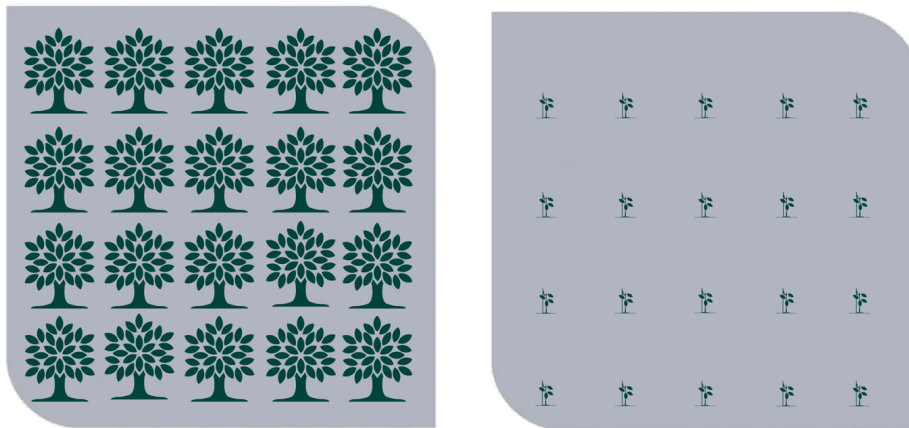
The following citizen quotes, from the 2013 ReThink London document, clearly show that all Londoners, of all ages, want to live in:

- “A City with an abundant, healthy urban forest that truly reflects our brand as **The Forest City**.”
- “A City that celebrates, **practices** and encourages [...] the preservation of natural heritage.”
- “A City that grows in responsible ways that protect our resources.”

To be or not to be the Forest City?

Thus, the decision facing London City Council is part of a bigger question:

“Will London remain the Forest City”?



To move the needle towards a “yes”, the residents of the no-exit, 11 house Doncaster Place respectfully ask the City for a sidewalk exemption, and for the protection of its legacy trees during road reconstruction.