

CityHall letter

London City Council
300 Dufferin Avenue
London

16 March, 2021

RE: Another Way for Friars Way

Dear City Councillors

We are writing to request Council to support the vast majority of our neighbours on Friars Way and nearby streets, who are seeking to preserve the 30 or more full sized Linden trees that may be destroyed to accommodate the street reconstruction planned for 2021. The planned design of the reconstruction includes the installation of sidewalks, — sidewalks that were never planned for this street when the subdivision was built approximately 60 years ago. We understand the rationale for sidewalk installation is to promote added safety and accessibility for the street. It is our contention that our street is already safe and accessible for pedestrians of a wide range of mobility — including children learning with trikes and a mom nearby, strollers, dogs on leads, pedestrians with assist devices like canes or wheeled 'walkers', joggers, hikers, cyclists, and skate boarders. My wife and I have retired, and if the trees are cut down for the street renovation we personally will never see a recovery of the tree canopy — certainly not in our lifetime.

We have lived at #71 as the original owners, and have seen the motor vehicle and pedestrian use of the street change over the years — with the completion of the subdivision along our street, access to Wonderland Rd blocked for southbound exit with concrete curbs, and the use by young students diminished with the closure of Sherwood Forest junior school (K - 6). We are well aware of the usefulness of sidewalks, as there are several nearby streets e.g. Annadale, Wychood Pk, and Lawson Rd, all of which might be considered as access roads for entering and leaving the neighbourhood, or near public schools.

Building sidewalks on Friars Way would alter pedestrian and motor vehicle use of the street, with a division of users – some confined to the roadway and others perhaps obligated to stay on the sidewalk. We know, too, that street alterations are being talked about and argued repeatedly throughout the city for those neighbourhoods designated for street rebuilding in the near future; and too, that other residential regions will be paying attention in anticipation that their own streets will follow in a few years. But the safety and accessibility issues are not a black and white issue, and we wish to draw attention to the following points.

1. We know our street is safe and serves a wide variety of users – with motor vehicle use for those who live here or are visiting, including service vehicles, and a broad range of other users of all abilities, from mobility challenged seniors with walkers, to dog walkers and fast moving cyclists. Attempts by our own neighbours to seek out accident or incident reports for safety issues across the city, or elsewhere in similar towns and cities across the province dealing with safety on

residential (not thoroughfare) streets came up empty. To our knowledge the incidence is so rare that studies have not been warranted.

2. Sidewalks are not always the pathway of choice for late fall and winter months. While the city is generally prompt with snow removal, there are circumstances that put the sidewalk as second best when slushy, pooled with water, sometimes with black ice, and irregular with up and down irregularities due to driveways and tree roots. Often in winter at the busy time of pedestrian “rush hour” near schools we see strollers being navigated along the road surface, along with other users like dog walkers and joggers – preferring the “groomed roadway” by motor traffic, instead of the nearby sidewalk.
3. The loss of 30 or more trees, specific to the rebuilding of Friars Way is a dreadful loss – with the remaining trees NOT shading the sidewalk side of the street. The environmental loss is substantial, including the oxygen producing effect due to tree ‘metabolism’, the shade benefit reducing air conditioning requirements in summer months, reduction of wind and soil erosion, and bird habitat. Sapling replacement would take decades to mature to the level of the current tree canopy.
4. The little leaf lindens represent an excellent choice by the city planners many decades ago. Lindens are long lived, have a shape that suits roadside planting, are reasonably low impact for blossom debris, and are relatively disease free. Their lifespan of around 100 or more years means that our current population of street trees on Friars Way are good as full mature trees for another 50 years.
5. In discussions with other concerned neighbours, we agree that the street redesign MIGHT be able to accommodate sidewalks, with street narrowing, and *still preserve the mature Lindens on our street*. This the theme of our neighbourhood submission has been *LOOKING FOR ANOTHER WAY*.
6. The topic of sidewalks has been hotly debated from door to door, and with city government representatives. We know that there are hundreds of signatures on petitions to ask the city to reconsider the street rebuilding issue. This is not only our own neighbourhood, but is, and will be playing out across the entire city of London for years to come. We urge Council to look at sidewalk exemptions as a respect for residential streets being widely varied from location to location, while still staying within the general policy of sidewalk installations.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely

Peter and Catherine Canham
71 Friars Way