

Subject: Submission for March 24th agenda-Sidewalks. Person with disability opposed to sidewalks.

Dear Members of Council:

I am writing as a person with disabilities *who actually lives in, and moves around,* Sherwood Forest/Orchard Park, one the affected neighbourhoods.

I am opposed to introducing more sidewalks to the neighbourhood because THEY REDUCE ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY. I am a person with significant mobility issues who requires two walking sticks or canes to walk.

Why am I claiming that sidewalks reduce safety and accessibility? Because the uneven surface of sidewalks have have caused me to trip and fall many times. And this is just when the weather is good and there is no snow on the ground.

In winter, the sidewalks are completely impassable. They are rarely cleared and even when they are, there is usually no salt or sand.

I love walking around our neighbourhood BECAUSE I CAN WALK SAFELY ON THE ROADS. The roads are better paved and smoother than sidewalks. There is little car traffic. And most importantly, there is a long history, and culture, of people of all ages and abilities claiming the space of the roads.

Last year, according to a search of Google's Community Crime Map for London, there were NO TRAFFIC INCIDENCES REPORTED IN SHERWOOD FOREST OR ORCHARD PARK? ZERO. (See link below).

The impetus behind sidewalks seems to be to make it safer for all citizens, especially those with disabilities, to move around neighbourhoods. To reduce the risk of harm or injury.

BUT WHEN THE RISK CURRENTLY STANDS AT ZERO, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO REDUCE IT FURTHER.

So how would putting in sidewalks make the community less accessible and safe? Couldn't I still walk the roads safely?

No. In my experience, on roads with sidewalks, drivers do not assume they must share the road with people. This makes the roads less safe for people who use them.

Members of the CWC who voted against exemptions for sidewalks have taken a very paternalistic attitude towards people with disabilities living in these communities. They seem to assume that they know better than we do about what makes our neighbourhood safe and accessible for us.

Some councillors, and the media, have framed the sidewalk debate as, well, ableist homeowners who want to keep trees on their front lawns vs. the safety, accessibility and inclusivity for all Londoners, especially persons with disabilities.

But they are wrong. If trees are cut down trees to put in sidewalks in these older neighbourhoods, both the environment and persons with disabilities will lose out. There will be no winners.

I am not a "never sidewalker". In downtown London, or the main arteries like Wonderland Road, for example, sidewalks are the lesser (safer) of two evils. Clearly, one-size-fits-all policies on sidewalks serves no ones interests. Neither does treating persons with disabilities as a mono-culture.

The facts on this issue tell a different story than the one currently being occupied by the feelings and beliefs of the pro-sidewalkers: Quiet residential streets with little car traffic and long histories of being sidewalk-free, are safe and accessible.

The more that sidewalks are added to our neighbourhood, the more you are keeping people like me; people who elderly; people who are in wheelchairs, stuck in our homes and unable to engage with our beautiful neighbourhood.

Please don't take our neighbourhood away from us.

Sincerely,

Meredith Levine

40 Longbow Road

Traffic Incidence Report for Sherwood Forest/Orchard Park Neighbourhoods for 2020
We ran a search for 1 year x traffic incidents. If you do the same and move the map to our neighbourhood, you can see there were no reported incidents in SF/OP. The traffic incidents were mostly on Wonderland.

<https://communitycrimemap.com/?address=London,ON>

LexisNexis® Community Crime Map

is best viewed in Internet Explorer 11+, Firefox V27+ and Chrome V30+. Time Slider

communitycrimemap.com