

Report to Civic Works Committee

To: Chair and Members
Civic Works Committee

From: Kelly Scherr, P.Eng., MBA, FEC
Deputy City Manager, Environment & Infrastructure

Subject: Whitehills Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan
Public Participation Meeting

Date: January 31, 2023

Recommendation

That on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Environment and Infrastructure the Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan for Whitehills **BE APPROVED** to inform the annual Renew London Construction Program.

Executive Summary

Neighbourhood Connectivity Plans (NCP) establish a guide for the installation of new sidewalks in legacy areas of the City with limited sidewalk connectivity. Staff have developed a community engagement strategy to guide communities in thinking holistically about pedestrian connectivity in their neighbourhood.

This report provides a summary of NCP engagement completed for the Whitehills community and recommends an NCP to provide a blueprint for where to add sidewalk infrastructure when the time comes to reconstruct a given neighbourhood street.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The following report supports Municipal Councils 2019-2023 Strategic Plan through the strategic focus area of Building a Sustainable City and Creating a Safe London for Women and Girls. The report identifies strategies for building new neighbourhood infrastructure to support mobility, safety and more livable, sustainable, vibrant communities. The plan also identifies the implementation and enhancement of road safety measures to deliver convenient and connected mobility choices.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- Planning and Environment Committee – June 13, 2016 – The London Plan
- Civic Works Committee – August 13, 2018 – Complete Streets Design Manual
- Civic Works Committee – September 25, 2018 – Byron South Neighbourhood Sidewalk Connectivity Plan
- Civic Works Committee – February 9, 2021 – New Sidewalks in 2021 Infrastructure Reconstruction Projects
- Civic Works Committee – March 15, 2021 – New Sidewalks in 2021 Infrastructure Reconstruction Projects – Special meeting to hear public delegations
- Civic Works Committee – November 23, 2021 – New Sidewalks in Established Neighbourhoods.

1.2 Background

The south leg of Edgehill Crescent and Edgehill Road were initially scheduled for reconstruction in 2022. In November 2021, staff recommended deferring these projects to 2023 to allow time for community dialogue around neighbourhood connection and the Whitehills community was identified as one of the first neighbourhoods to undertake NCP engagement.

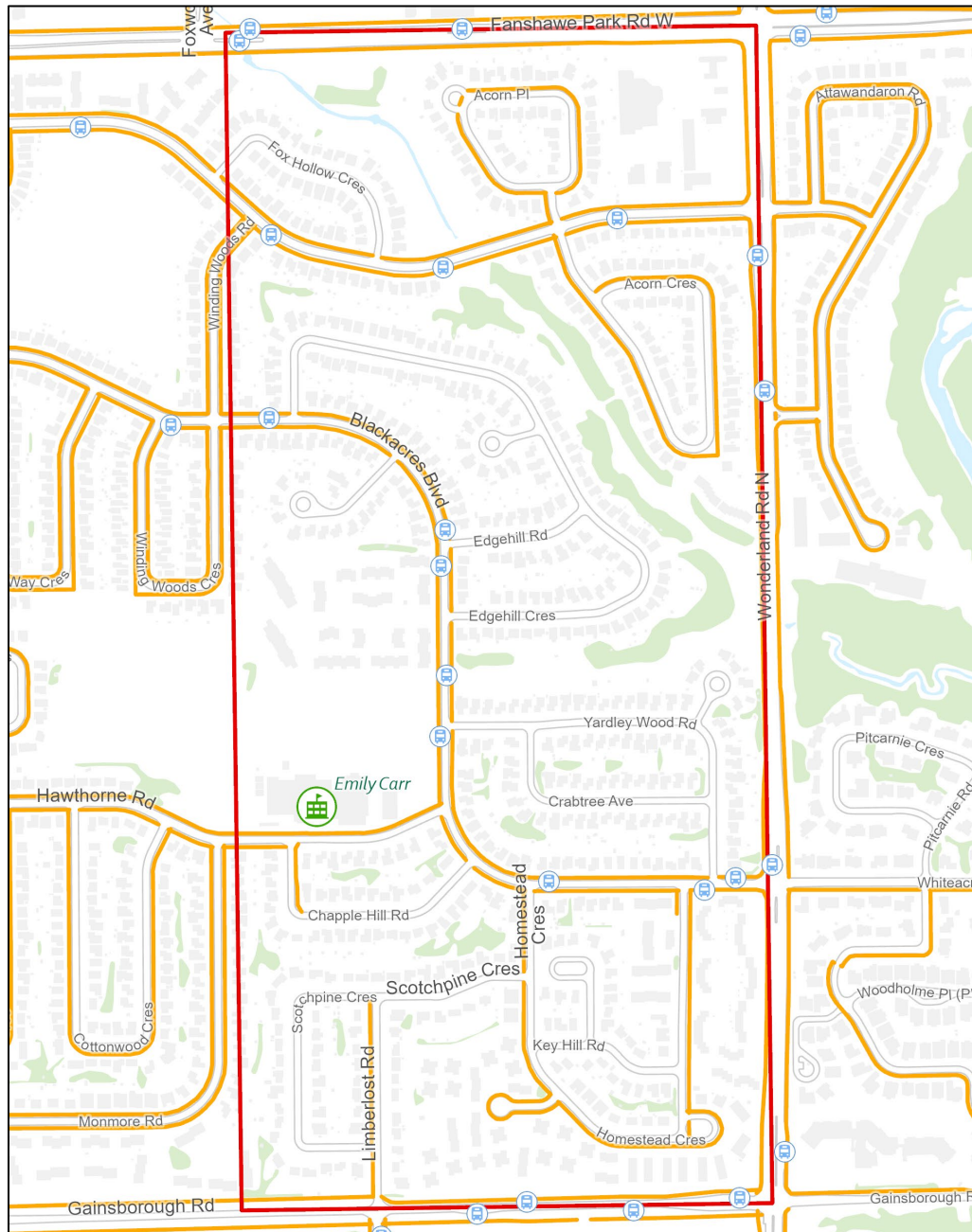


Figure 1 - Whitehills Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan Review Area

1.3 The Whitehills Neighbourhood

The Whitehills neighbourhood was constructed from approximately 1964 to 1981 and the road structure is reflective of the design principles common in that era. The uptake in personal vehicle ownership at the time had a huge influence on the way neighbourhoods were designed. In areas like Whitehills, you'll notice far fewer sidewalks, more meandering streets and wider roads.

The neighbourhood is made up of long winding crescents and deadend courts with little regard for pedestrian connection. The only streets with existing sidewalks are Blackacres Boulevard as the collector spine of the neighbourhood and those streets that

have already been rebuilt through an infrastructure renewal project.

Residents: More than 2,500 residents live within the boundary area identified for the Whitehills NCP and most people live in homes. There are 1,057 households of which 96.1% are houses and 3.9% are apartments or other forms of housing.

Schools: Elementary schools in the area include Emily Carr Public School and St. Marguerite d'Youville Catholic Elementary. Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School is nearby to the south.

Businesses: There are significant business areas nearby at Sherwood Forest Mall to the south and the Sunningdale Village Plaza to the north at Fanshawe Park Road and Wonderland Road North.

Parks: A popular pedestrian amenity within the Whitehills neighbourhood is the South Foxhollow Ravine with connections to Lawson Park and the Medway Valley trail systems. Just outside of the NCP boundary are Jaycee Park and Northwest Optimist Park adjacent to Emily Carr Public School.

Streetlighting: Most streets are lit, with a few exceptions in the neighbourhood's southeast corner for Homestead Crescent, Key Hill Road and Place and Limberlost Road.

Traffic: Blackacres Boulevard sees the highest traffic volumes in the community with over 4000 vehicles per day (vpd) with Aldersbrook Road the next busiest street at 3000 vpd. Limberlost, Scotchpine and Homestead Crescent all have approximately 1000 vpd. The remaining streets in the neighbourhood all have 500 or less vpd.

Transit: For the White Hills area, Route 9 operates along Gainsborough, Blackacres and Wonderland

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Whitehills NCP Engagement

NCP engagement for Whitehills offered a variety of options for residents to provide feedback over the month of June 2022.

Project Website: Residents were able to visit a project website for the neighbourhood (getinvolved.london.ca/whitehills) to submit comments, answer survey questions or use a community map tool to provide input. The website also contained detailed information about the rationale, process and timelines for developing a Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan.

Virtual Webinar: The City hosted a virtual community meeting on June 13, 2022 via Zoom webinar, to outline the process for developing a Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan and how to contribute feedback followed by a Q&A session. The recorded presentation was then posted to the NCP website.

Drop-In Community Consultation: City staff hosted public drop-in session on Tuesday, June 21 at the Sherwood Library for residents who wanted to drop in and provide feedback in person. There were hard copies of the online survey for those that prefer to submit a handwritten response.

The project team designed specific questions to solicit feedback to help define each neighbourhood's priorities around accessibility, connectivity and pedestrian infrastructure. Whether people were using the map or survey tools on the website or answering a paper survey in person at a pop-up consultation, the questions were the same. Residents were also welcomed to provide their own personal commentary about sidewalks and whether they should be considered within the neighbourhood.

Table 1 provides a summary of the various forms of feedback received through the community engagement for Whitehills.

Table 1: Summary of Whitehills Community Feedback

Total Get Involved website visits	299
Submitted a comment on the website	17
Filled out a survey on the website	35
Submitted pins on the map on the website	19
Approximate # of people who attended pop-up consultation	50-60
# of paper surveys received at pop-up consultation	11
# of unique viewers who attended webinar	12
# of resident signatures on petition regarding Edgehill Crescent sidewalk	103

Many residents provided helpful, neighbourhood-level feedback based on the specific questions asked. As well, others provided more personal commentary about why a sidewalk should not be considered for their own specific street. This type of feedback came to us via in phone calls to the project team lead, as a “general comment” on the website, in person to staff at the pop-up consultations and in the case of White Hills, an organized group of residents attended the pop-up consultation at Sherwood Library and also prepared a petition signed by residents of Edgehill Crescent.

What we heard

Among the common themes in terms of what people consider important destinations, the schools, parks, trails and area businesses are definitely top priorities. As well, a lot of people identified Blackacres Boulevard and Hawthorne Road as areas where they like walking and where they notice lots of pedestrians.

In general, the top rationales provided for why sidewalks should not be considered in a given area or on a given street, consisted of the following:

- Residents felt that there was not enough foot or car traffic on the street to warrant the addition of sidewalks, and expressed that walking on the road was acceptable and safe for themselves and their neighbours
- Many residents indicated they were concerned about potential loss of trees
- Impacts to landscaping and driveways were key concerns
- Some residents expressed concern about sidewalks not being adequately maintained during the winter, believing it is hazardous to walk on a sidewalk than to walk on the road

Staff did speak to a handful of people who voiced their support for more sidewalks being added. Some residents highlighted the need for more sidewalks in their area overall, while simultaneously stating that sidewalks should not be considered for their street in particular.

Residents from Edgehill Crescent provided feedback in the form of a petition. There are 93 homes on Edgehill Crescent. The petition was signed by 103 residents with only one indicating a preference for adding a sidewalk. One resident offered their support for a sidewalk on Edgehill Crescent through a direct email to staff while another requested a sidewalk for this street via website feedback.

Traffic Calming: Additional traffic calming was installed in the Whitehills community in 2022. In addition to existing traffic calming measures on Blackacres Boulevard south of Edgehill Crescent, speed cushions were added on:

- Aldersbrook Road between Aldersbrook Gate and Wonderland Road North;
- Hawthorne Road at Emily Carr Public School; and
- Blackacres Boulevard east of Winding Woods Crescent.

The Traffic Calming Program is currently focussed on proactively treating school zones to encourage active and safe travel to school and address recurring concerns. For sections of streets outside of school zones, residents may submit a request to be considered for traffic calming measures following the Council Approved Traffic Calming Policy. Speed cushions were implemented on Hawthorne Road to support the school zone and on Aldersbrook Road and Blackacres Boulevard based on neighbourhood petitions.

2.2 Recommended Whitehills NCP

A cross-functional working group was assembled to review input gathered through the NCP engagement process drawing upon expertise from Construction Administration, Transportation Planning & Design, the City's Active Transportation Manager, Communications, and the ARAO Office. The working group considered the distinct characteristics of each neighbourhood to identify gaps in connectivity that warrant new sidewalks. The group also reviewed other infrastructure options to aid in safe, active mobility and respond to things heard from the community – such as pedestrian crossings, pathway extensions or four-way stops.

The recommended infrastructure to improve connectivity for the Whitehills neighbourhood is summarized below, listed in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 3 (Appendix A).

Sidewalk Recommendations: The Whitehills area is not structured in a way that supports a pedestrian grid pattern so the working group focused on pedestrian destinations, desire lines and community feedback while also considering examples from the other two trial NCP communities to maintain a consistent approach in identifying locations where sidewalks can provide the most benefit.

With a few exceptions, feedback from residents on Edgehill Crescent was not supportive of a new sidewalk. The rationale provided was consistent with common themes concerning impacts to trees, landscaping, driveways, and the general feeling that traffic and pedestrian volumes do not warrant the need for a new sidewalk. Staff did receive two requests to include a sidewalk. Edgehill Crescent was noted by many residents as a desirable street for walking. It is 885m long, serves over 90 homes and offers direct connection to the South Foxhollow Ravine pathway. For these reasons, and consistent with recommendations in other neighbourhoods, a sidewalk was initially recommended by the working group to support an inclusive and accessible street for future generations.

Figure 2 shows an example of a curb-face sidewalk. While not suitable in all cases, building the sidewalk into the paved road width with no grass boulevard can sometimes help mitigate impacts to trees, driveways and landscaping. The trade-off of this design option is the loss of on-street parking on one side of the road to support winter maintenance and emergency services access. Edgehill Crescent South and Edgehill Road are scheduled for reconstruction in 2023 and as such the design has advanced to a point that staff could assess potential sidewalk options. In the case of Edgehill Crescent, staff have confirmed that even with a curbface design, the impacts to driveways, parking would be significant to the point of affecting the functionality of this neighbourhood street. There would also be considerable tree impacts.

The need remains to support pedestrian connection to the South Foxhollow Ravine access off Edgehill Crescent. As an alternative, a curbface sidewalk is recommended on Edgehill Road combined with a short sidewalk connection on the west side of Edgehill Crescent. This would provide more direct connection for pedestrians not comfortable walking on the road to access the ravine trail.



Figure 2: Example Curb-face Sidewalk Installation – Before and After

A sidewalk is recommended on one side of Scotchpine Crescent from the Chappie Hill Walkway to Homestead Crescent. This section of Scotchpine Crescent represents a gap in pedestrian connection from Northwest Optimist Park and the Chappie Hill walkway to the southeastern areas of neighbourhood and commercial areas beyond. This connection would also support pedestrian access to Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School. The continuation of Scotchpine Crescent to the south is a short street with no other pedestrian connection and so the sidewalk is not recommended to continue around the rest of the crescent

Yardley Wood Road and Yardley Wood Place provide direct connection to the South Fox Hollow Ravine pathway. The length of Yardley Wood Road is also consistent with other longer crescents where Mobility Policy 349 has been applied. Both these streets were reconstructed in 2004 will not be due for additional lifecycle renewal for some time. However, the NCP still recommends ultimately implementing a sidewalk either through the New Sidewalk Program or through a longer-term future construction project.

A total of four crescents, two roads and three courts have been recommended for exemption from Mobility Policy 349 and as such would be reconstructed with no sidewalk when the time comes for infrastructure renewal. Sidewalks will be reconstructed on streets where they currently exist.

Pedestrian Crossing Recommendations: NCP engagement received community feedback related to the high volumes of pedestrian crossings where the South Foxhollow ravine meets Aldersbrook Road and at Winding Woods Crescent. As traffic calming measures have recently been installed in these locations, staff will monitor conditions to further consider the need for a pedestrian crossing to improve connectivity.

A new pedestrian crossing will also be considered where Edgehill Road meets Blackacres Boulevard if warranted to support the new sidewalk recommendation for Edgehill Road.

Pedestrian Signal at Foxhollow Avenue and Fanshawe Park Road West: A recent traffic study of Foxwood Avenue at Fanshawe Park Road West determined that the intersection does not meet the traffic signal warrants for either volume, delay or collisions. While the study also fell short of the 100 pedestrian crossings needed to warrant a pedestrian signal, direct connection of the South Foxhollow Ravine pathway across Fanshawe Park Road would greatly improve connectivity for active mobility in the area. Staff will review options to advance a pedestrian signal at this location.

2.3 Street level engagement

The NCP recommendations provided in this report are based on feedback gathered through Stage 1 Neighbourhood Consultation. For those streets where a sidewalk has been recommended. Residents who live on the street will have another opportunity to provide feedback on options to help refine the sidewalk design prior to construction. Stage 2 Street-level Engagement will consider factors such as trees and vegetation, existing driveways, on-street parking, emergency vehicle access, winter road maintenance and streetlighting to develop a design that mitigates some of the impacts of adding a new sidewalk.

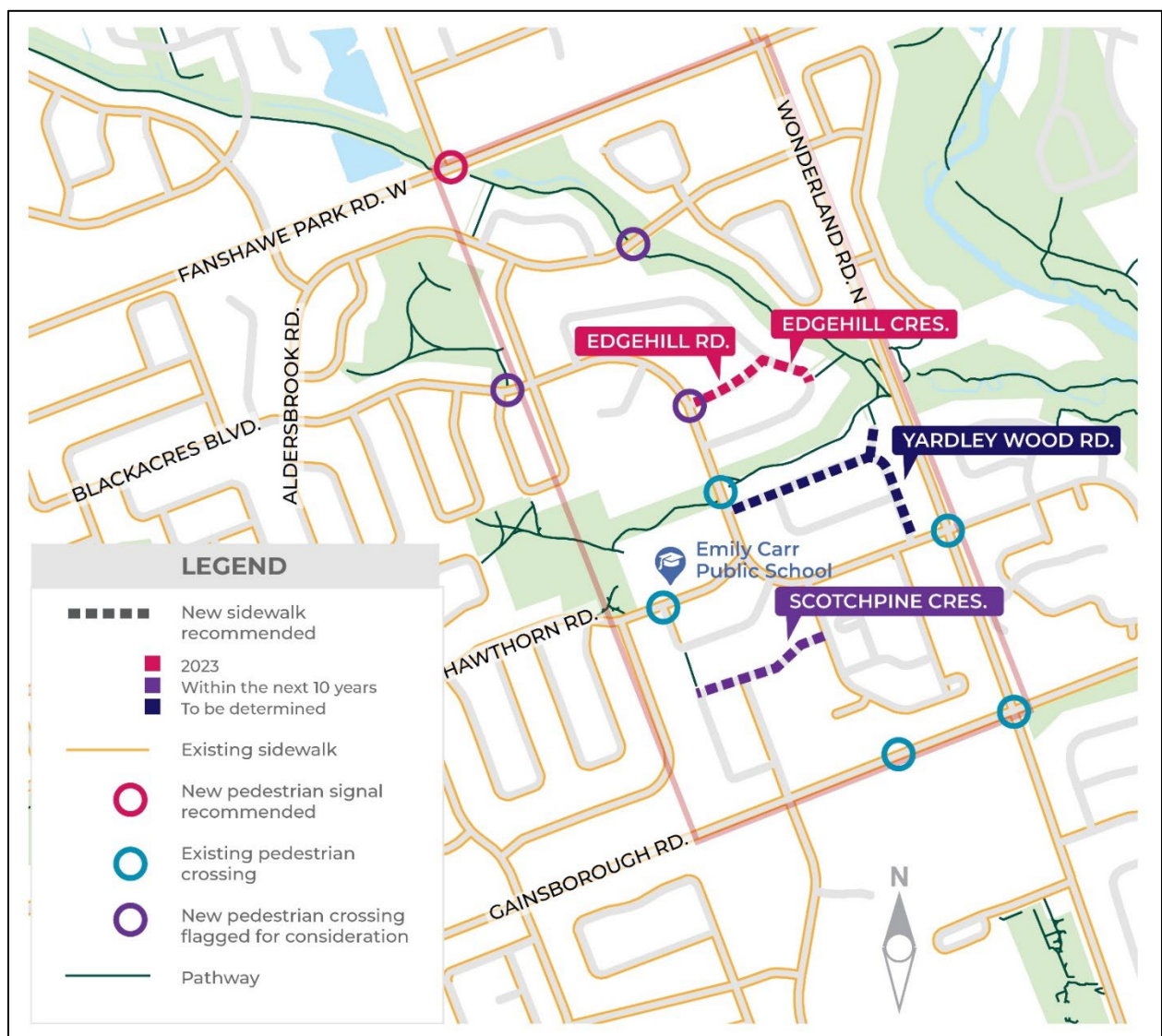


Figure 3: Whitehills Recommended Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan Map

Table 2: Whitehills Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan Recommendations

Street	Timing	Location	Program*
Sidewalk recommended on one side of the street:			
Edgehill Road	2023	Blackacres Crescent to Edgehill Crescent	LRRP
Edgehill Crescent	2023	Edgehill Road to Trail Connection	LRRP
Scotchpine Crescent	5-10yrs	Chappie Hill Walkway to Homestead Crescent	TBD
Yardley Wood Road	TBD	Full street length – Blackacres to Blackacres	NSP
Yardley Wood Place	TBD	Yardley Wood Road to Medway Valley Path	NSP
New pedestrian crossing to be considered:			
Blackacres Boulevard	Monitor	Crossing at Snake Creek multi-use trail	RSS
Blackacres Boulevard	Monitor	Crossing at Winding Woods Crescent W.	RSS
Blackacres Boulevard	Monitor	Crossing at Edghill Road	RSS
New pedestrian signal recommended:			
Fanshawe Park Road	1-3yrs	New pedestrian signal at Foxwood Avenue	RSS

* Sidewalks and pedestrian supportive infrastructure are constructed under various programs:

- IRLP – Infrastructure Lifecycle Renewal Program
- LRRP – Local Road Reconstruction Program
- NSP – New Sidewalk Program
- RSS – Road Safety Strategy
- TBD – Program/Timeline is To Be Determined

Conclusion

The recommended Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan for Whitehills was informed by feedback collected through community engagement, available technical information, input from local agencies and partners and London Plan policy. Subject to Council approval, the Whitehills NCP will establish the streets where new sidewalk infrastructure will be built when the time comes for infrastructure renewal.

Prepared and Submitted by:

Jennie Dann, P.Eng., Director, Construction and Infrastructure Services

Recommended by:

Kelly Scherr, P. Eng., MBA, FEC, Deputy City Manager, Environment & Infrastructure

Attachments:

Appendix A: Whitehills Recommended Neighbourhood Connectivity Plan Map

cc. Paul Choma Construction Administration Engineer
Daniel Hall Program Manager, Active Transportation
Shane Maguire Division Manager, Traffic Engineering
Karl Grabowski Manager, Manager, Transportation Design
Sarah Grady Traffic and Transportation Engineer
Melanie Stone Accessibility and Inclusion Advisor

Appendix A: Map of Connectivity Measures Recommended for Whitehills

