Report to Civic Works Committee

To: **Chair and Members**
Civic Works Committee
From: **Kelly Scherr, P.Eng., MBA, FEC**
Managing Director, Environmental & Engineering Services and City Engineer
Subject: **New Sidewalks in 2021 Infrastructure Reconstruction Projects**
Date: **February 9, 2021**

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Environmental & Engineering Services and City Engineer, the following information concerning implementation of new sidewalks on neighbourhood street reconstruction projects proposed herein, **BE ENDORSED** for implementation in the 2021 Renew London Construction Program.

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 the building of new neighbourhood infrastructure to support development and mobility in the City and supports more livable 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

- Civic Works Committee – June 19, 2012 – London 2030 Transportation Master Plan
- Planning and Environment Committee – June 13, 2016 – The London Plan
- Civic Works Committee – August 13, 2018 – Complete Streets Design Manual

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the framework in which decisions are made in order to build sidewalks on neighborhood street reconstruction projects to reduce accessibility barriers. Multiple neighbourhood streets without sidewalks are included to be rebuilt in this year's Renew London Construction Program. The report proactively provides committee and Council information while staff complete designs and plan public consultation and construction.

This report identifies which streets in the upcoming program are recommended for new sidewalks to be added on at least one side for accessibility, safety and walkability reasons.

The sidewalk candidates described herein are planned for implementation via the 2021 Renew London Construction Program. Stand-alone sidewalks not associated with larger infrastructure reconstruction projects get implemented via the New Sidewalk Program. Information on the New Sidewalk Program is communicated separately and is not included in this report.

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Neighbourhood Street Reconstruction 2021 – Adding Sidewalks

The City is committed to maintaining strong and healthy communities through safe and accessible infrastructure. In 2021, the Renew London Construction Program includes projects that will be reconstructing neighbourhood streets in poor road condition. The scope of work generally includes replacing the road and underground services where necessary and rebuilding and restoring areas disturbed by construction to current standards. Projects are surveyed and designed over the winter and tendered in spring noting each project varies in length, excavation depth and extent of infrastructure replacement. Community engagement typically occurs based on the degree of disruption and once the design has progressed enough to provide meaningful information. Consultation typically occurs in the late winter and spring. In some cases, these projects present an opportunity to include building a new sidewalk in compliance with Council policy on one or both sides of the street where they currently do not exist.

Walking is an active mode of transportation promoted by the Smart Moves 2030 Transportation Master Plan and the London Plan. It is also an integral part of a transit trip. Sidewalks support walking safely and accessibly for Londoners of all ages and abilities. Implementation of new sidewalks is also a response to Council's climate change emergency declaration by supporting sustainable transportation choices.

The design of the reconstruction projects with proposed new sidewalks is underway. Sidewalks will be designed for accessibility, safety and walkability reasons. Due to constraints most often related to property lines, mature tree and property impacts, combined with consideration of pedestrian origins and destinations, most of the identified streets will be reconstructed with a sidewalk on one side only. The design process develops preferred alignments based on the existing network, impact on trees, landscaping and utilities. All projects require a City Forestry staff member to analyze all trees on City right-of-way within the project limits, support tree decisions for that project and assist in the creation of tree protection plans. Tree decisions include the determination of the health and the impact of construction activities for both sides of the street. Analysis has been started for most 2021 locations and letters will be sent out notifying affected residents of the project, sidewalk design and tree impacts. If residents in the neighbourhood request further information, staff will plan additional consultation opportunities to address resident concerns.

The list of new sidewalks to be included in 2021 neighbourhood street reconstruction projects is provided below. The table shows how many trees are on the street and the approximate number of trees to be removed for the installation of the sidewalk. The approximate tree removals identified are based on sidewalk installation; however, some removals are often necessary due to overlapping infrastructure impacts such as watermain replacement or curb related instability and also tree health assessments.

Location	From	To	Existing Trees	Trees Requiring Removal	Sidewalk Location
Abbey Rise (plus Scarlett connection to Wychwood)	Longbow Road	Scarlett Avenue	24 (6)	6 (3)	West * (East) *
Bartlett Crescent	Viscount Road	Kinnear Crescent	41	9	East *
Elm Street	Trafalgar Street	Hamilton Road	1	1	East **
Friars Way	Annadale Drive	Wychwood Park	96	30	North *
Imperial Road	Grenfell Drive	Balcarres Road	17	6	East *
Paymaster Avenue	Burlington St	east limit	5	2	North *
St. Anthony Road	Hyde Park Road	Hampton Crescent	35	10	South *

Tarbart Terrace	Deer Park Circle	Deer Park Circle	36	6	South, inside *

* Recommendation for one-sided sidewalk based on conflicts with mature trees, right-of-way widths and property impacts.

** Installation will be a second sidewalk because of minimal impacts and the direct connection to a school destination

Doncaster Place, Culver Place, and East Afton Place are short neighbourhood streets that will be fully reconstructed in 2021. They have no existing sidewalks and are dead end court-style streets that nave no connecting links to other destinations. These types of locations are normally not considered for a new sidewalk, however, will be independently reviewed for the prospect of including one where feasible during the design process.

Consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Transportation Advisory Committee is underway concurrently with the preparation of this report.

2.2 Challenges and Solutions

Implementing new sidewalks is sometimes contentious within neighbourhoods and requires the balancing of differing objectives. The conflict between the desire to preserve existing trees and the goal of providing a safe and accessible mobility system often arises from residents. The ability to reach consensus on these competing priorities varies from location to location.

During final design, City staff will complete an assessment of potential impacts and mitigation strategies to address resident and neighbourhood needs and concerns. Preferred alignment for new sidewalks includes a boulevard noting in many cases to minimize tree and driveway impacts, sidewalks are often built adjacent to the curb. In some scenarios, sidewalks are placed along the corridor where a new watermain is built. Typically, in those cases, trees may require removal for the watermain and the new sidewalk is located over the restored watermain corridor.

Several challenges and mitigation strategies that staff have used on past neighborhood street projects when implementing a new sidewalk are shown in the table below.

Challenges	**Mitigation Strategies and Solutions**
Tree conflicts, loss of trees and established canopy	- Install new trees - Install sidewalk into the road (1.8 metre combination sidewalk adjacent to curb), narrowing the road width and slowing traffic
Loss of parking as sidewalk crosses driveway	- Install sidewalk strategically so that resident parking spots are maintained as much as possible - Install sidewalk into the road to maintain longer driveways for homeowner and help eliminate boulevard reduction
Damage and impacts to landscaping or privately installed irrigation	- Provide residents early notice, allowing ample time for residents to relocate
Driveway damaged during construction	- Restore driveway to existing or better condition after construction
Flat road profiles and reverse or steep grades to property	- Implement new drainage improvements - Standard sidewalk (1.5 metres wide) with boulevard and vary if possible - Grading, topsoil and sod required to blend into topography
Boulevards with above ground utility structures, untamed vegetation	- Structures relocated prior to construction - Compare impacts to other side of road when choosing which side to add sidewalk

Tree removal timelines	- Due to legislation, any required tree removal is preferred before April 1 and are marked five calendar days prior to removal - Decision early to ensure staff have appropriate resources and time to plan and remove
Lack of consensus among neighbours on street (i.e., tree removal versus adding new sidewalk)	- Information sharing - The City's Forestry Staff assess all streets with tree removals and initiate replanting efforts in subsequent years
Project Timelines	- Council endorsement early 2021 which will allow designs to finalize and projects tendered to ensure they get built this year and avoid weather issues that can have major impacts to completion and quality of work, namely concrete and asphalt.

Following the design phase communications, City Staff plan on holding virtual information sessions with residents. Staff will also send an additional notice before construction providing residents with an anticipated construction schedule that will include project manager contact information.

To improve pedestrian safety, connectivity, and accessibility, the 2020 neighbourhood reconstruction program included approximately 2,600 metres of new sidewalk on streets where they did not previously exist. This figure will be similar in 2021.

2.3 Policy background

Cities across Ontario are making changes to how their roads are planned, designed and built with road safety for vulnerable users a primary concern (i.e., people of all ages and abilities walking, rolling, or riding a bicycle).

Streets without sidewalks are a common occurrence in North American cities, which largely reduced building them in the post Second World War period. Many of London's subdivisions built in the 1950's to 1970's did not include sidewalks.

The City has the policy basis to build complete streets that both allow people to be more physically active and better connected to access goods and services. Complete streets are those which are designed to support many different forms of mobility and provide infrastructure that make all forms of mobility safe, attractive, comfortable, and efficient. This can lead to more vibrant livable communities.

The desire to alter road design policy and practice is fuelled in large part by changes to how people want to travel around their neighbourhood. Many communities across Ontario have enacted Official Plan policies that are supportive of creating roadways that serve multiple travel modes. There is a need to create streets that are safe and functional for pedestrians. This reflects the reality that pedestrians and cyclists are more vulnerable than vehicular road users, and that supporting active modes of transportation often results in health benefits, to both individuals and the community. Streets should be designed to be inclusive and accessible so that road users of all ages and abilities are accommodated to the maximum degree possible.

The City's new official plan, "The London Plan", which is partially in effect, and the City's in-force 1989 Official Plan, as well as the Transportation Master Plan (TMP), "Smart Moves", provide clear policy direction that the planning and design of future streets as well as the renewal of existing streets, should be supportive of all road users, and be "complete." Furthermore, in 2017, the City of London adopted the Vision Zero principles, which are based on the notion that no loss of life as a result of traffic-related collisions is acceptable.

The London Plan supports the creation of pedestrian friendly environments. Walking is the most universal means of travel, an important form of exercise and an enjoyable recreational activity. All Londoners are pedestrians at various points in their journey,

which include individuals who are walking or using a mobility device. A pedestrian-friendly environment provides direct routes to destinations, minimizes risks, and provides a comfortable experience for pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Sidewalk are proposed for all current users and for those that may live here in the future.

London Plan policy 349 (currently under appeal) provides specific direction for where sidewalks are to be installed. It includes that “To support walkability, sidewalks shall be located on both sides of all streets. An exception to this requirement may be considered in the following instances. In most of these instances a sidewalk will be required on one side of the street.” The policy goes on to provide seven criteria, including the following: “6. Road reconstruction projects, where the existing conditions such as mature trees, right-of-way widths, or infrastructure would impede sidewalks on both sides of the street.” Therefore, it is the policy of the London Plan that road reconstruction projects should provide sidewalks on both sides unless there are specific constraints that may result in it being more desirable to include one, or in some cases, no sidewalks.

2.4 Community Input

The City works to create neighbourhoods where residents are able to reach on foot essential destinations such as grocery stores, parks, and transit stops. Many local groups and organizations in London supported walkability and pedestrian safety in our community. Some of these groups are highlighted below.

Age Friendly London has action plans that specifically mention increasing walkability and safety of sidewalks, bike paths, improved connectivity of sidewalks, increased snow clearing, and increase benches along pathways.

Child and Youth Network has goals to create environments, neighbourhoods and opportunities that promote and support physical activity, create healthy and active neighbourhoods, build community connections to health activity opportunities.

Middlesex London Health Unit’s Strategic Plan refers to collaborative, integrated strategies to improve physical activity for all.

The Urban League supports more liveable neighbourhoods.

Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) encourages children to walk or wheel to school by educating students on road safety, improving surroundings and encouraging students to try active modes of transportation.

Accessibility Advisory Committee (ACCAC). City Staff attended the ACCAC virtual meeting on January 28, 2021 to review a memo describing the City’s complete street sidewalk assessment approach for 2021 Neighbourhood Street Reconstruction Projects that do not currently have sidewalks on either side of the street. From that consultation, the following actions were recommended by ACCAC:

a) the Civic Administration BE ADVISED that the AACCAC supports the inclusion of sidewalks on both sides of the streets listed within the Memo except in circumstances that warrant sidewalks on only one side of the street: and,

b) the Civic Administration BE ADVISED that the only instances that call for zero sidewalks on a street should be situations where the circumstances are insurmountable for the installation of sidewalks and, in those cases, the ACCAC should be consulted.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) also discussed and formally received a memo on the subject on January 26, 2021.

Finally, The City of London places a high priority on a culture of safety within the community with a focus on pro-actively identifying processes and tangible actions to increase the safety of women and girls. Introducing sidewalks improves the safety of our streets and increases the ability for women and girls to walk. City staff are all

encouraged to design spaces to increase the participation of women and girls and the introduction of sidewalks is an opportunity to improve a safe and inclusive street.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

3.1 Cost

The cost to add new sidewalks on streets where they currently do not exist for the neighbourhood street reconstruction program in 2021 is approximately $500,000 and is included in the annual program budgets. For context, the total program budget is about $10 million. The operating increase to maintain the additional 2,500 metres of sidewalk (i.e., snow removal) is approximately $3,000 annually.

4.0 Key Issues and Considerations

4.1. Legislation and Sidewalk Rational

Road construction offers an efficient and cost-effective opportunity to implement sidewalks and provide universally accessible, safe and walkable networks, regardless of age or ability.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires municipalities to remove barriers to accessibility. Sidewalks are infrastructure that provide universal accessibility, regardless of ability level. They offer a protected, dedicated space for all pedestrians, especially the most vulnerable, including when visibility is poor (i.e., weather events, dark).

The Planning Act, in subsection 24(1) requires that any public work undertaken conform with the official plan in effect. “Public work” is defined as any improvement of a structural nature or other undertaking that is within the jurisdiction of the municipality. The approach outlined herein conforms with the in-effect policies of the 1989 Official Plan. The specific “sidewalks” policy in the London Plan is under appeal, and not in effect, however, the approach also conforms with the direction of Council as adopted in the London Plan.

New sidewalks encourage exercise and help counter inactivity among residents through a built environment that promotes safe walking and cycling. Sidewalks support access and gentle exercise for seniors and their caregivers.

Sidewalks also provide pedestrians with a means of exploring their neighbourhood safely instead of sharing the road with vehicles. They create a pathway within and between neighbourhoods and support different travel modes (e.g., walking by self, with stroller, scooter, or using a walker or wheelchair).

Conclusion

The 2021 Neighbourhood Street Reconstruction Program supports infrastructure renewal and the City of London’s Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy by increasing safety and providing healthy equitable mobility for all. The program is also linked to two of the City of London’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan’s priorities (Building a Sustainable City and Creating a Safe London for Women and Girls) by building new transportation infrastructure to meet the long-term needs of our community.

This report identifies the planned implementation of sidewalk policies in the 2021 neighbourhood street reconstruction program. The information herein balances the mobility and safety goals with other policies and homeowner considerations. City staff will identify preferred street design and sidewalk alignments based on existing network, impact on trees, landscaping and utilities and will make every effort to accommodate local resident concerns and needs throughout the next stages of design and construction.

This strategy contributes to many City objectives related to pedestrian connectivity, is consistent with the work of numerous community groups, and identifies new infrastructure that will create strategic connections while balancing impacts.

The 2021 ReNew London program is planned to add approximately 2,500 metres of new sidewalk on neighbourhood streets to improve pedestrian safety, accessibility and connectivity while balancing other community needs. Adding sidewalks provides safer spaces for pedestrians, removes barriers for those with unique mobility considerations, and fosters equitable access to the community for all Londoners.

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