

## Memorandum

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**Cc:** City Commissioners, Directors and Managers

**From:** Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

**Date:** April 18, 2016

**Subject:** Renewal of the Accessibility Sidewalk Action Statement

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### PURPOSE:

To ensure that the City of St. Catharines creates a pedestrian network throughout the community that does not create barriers or preclude the participation of people with a disability with respect to sidewalks or pedestrian pathways, or lack thereof.

The purpose of this advocacy is founded in the need for independence, safety and personal autonomy in travelling throughout the City as a pedestrian with a disability, however all pedestrians benefit from this sidewalk action statement; children, adults, older adults, people who walk dogs, people who push baby buggies, people who walk, jog or roll – everyone.

A comprehensive network of accessible and connective sidewalks are paramount in the overall creation of an inclusive community. There are sidewalk within the City that have missing sections and therefore lack connectivity. These missing linkages must be addressed as a priority to ensure a functional and connected sidewalk system. This includes curb ramps that are safe; not steep or cross-sloped and have seamless transitions from connecting surfaces. The fact that home-owners, groups, or area residents of new or existing developments do not wish to have a sidewalk traverse the public easement at their property should not preclude its benefits to others or its future legacy for pedestrians.

## **BACKGROUND:**

This statement was previously presented to Council on March 24, 2010. The City's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) has reviewed, edited and condensed this message. It consistently endorses pedestrian linkages to be placed and maintained on new and existing roadways. Additionally private properties, such as malls and plazas could create increased business by becoming safely accessible to pedestrians through the installation of connective and accessible pedestrian routes.

Previously members of the community have approached Council in a public forum to specifically request the deferral or deletion of sidewalk installations. This is contrary to foundation documents such as the Official Plan, Site Plan Manual and the Zoning By-law. These requests only provide Council with a current situational aspect from an extremely small percentage of the community. Requests to remove sidewalks from plans of subdivision do not provide a legacy to future residents or pedestrian users of a particular roadway.

Additionally, the deferral or deletion of sidewalks from plans of subdivision (further to creating barriers and becoming inaccessible) create a greater requirement for vehicular traffic as pedestrians are compelled to consider vehicles instead of walking. In this era of green and environmental alternatives, public transit and pedestrian access has become a conduit to achieve this. Council has confirmed its continued support of a "walkable community".

Sidewalks act as physical safety separations between vehicles and pedestrians. Sidewalks that are setback from the roadway (providing a gap, generally grass, between the road and sidewalk) are more favourable than curb-faced sidewalks (located adjacent to the edge of the road). Sidewalks located at the curb-face are problematic for mobility devices and baby buggies in that, sidewalks need to dip at driveways from the elevation of the sidewalk to the elevation of the road that provides ramp access for vehicles to enter. This creates a cross-slope angle when mobility devices traverse these dips. Some slopes can be significantly steep and create a danger of tipping. The AAC advocates for sidewalks that are setback but if space does not allow a setback there may be no alternative but curb-faced sidewalk installation (more common on arterial and collector roadways).

Sidewalk widths need to be wide enough to accommodate mobility devices, and particularly need to be wide enough for these devices to turn around or pass other pedestrians.

This aforementioned is clearly stated in the Official Plan, Sec. 4.6, Universal Access and Sec. 5.3.3 Pedestrians.

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:**

The Official Plan states that sidewalks shall be provided on;

- both sides of the road on arterial roads
- both sides of the road on collector roads
- both sides of the road, if feasible.

Effective January 1, 2016 the Design of Public Spaces Standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* sets out requirements for exterior paths of travel (Sec. 80.21 – 80.31) which includes specific criteria for curb ramps and depressed curbs.

Therefore, to be inclusive and more consistent the AAC supports a connective and barrier-free network of sidewalks.

## **SIDEWALK ACTION STATEMENT:**

That the inclusion of sidewalks is paramount to the global creation of community connectivity; and

That sidewalks shall be included in all development (new or reconstructed); and

That sidewalks having “missing links” shall be remediated as a priority to ensure connectivity; and

That the Accessibility Advisory Committee is opposed to the removal, deferral deletion or waiving of any sidewalk installation within the City of St. Catharines; and

That sidewalks will have consistent technical requirements of 1.8 m. minimum width wherever possible on all roadways and include accessible curb ramp design requirements.

That setback sidewalks should be the preferred and primary installation, with curb-faced sidewalks being installed only where there is no adequate space to install setback sidewalks; and further

That Council denies all petitions to delete and/or defer sidewalks from plans.

## **ACTIONS:**

That all City departments, most specifically Planning & Building Services, are requested to place this Sidewalk Action Statement within any report to Council with respect to removal, deferral or deletion of sidewalk(s).

That Transportation & Environmental Services and Planning Building Services create the necessary drawings to clearly indicate these sidewalk requirements and adopt them into the guiding documents.

Council is requested to understand the negative impact and legacy that the removal, deferral or deletion of sidewalk(s) cause to all pedestrians, including people with a disability.

## **DEFINITIONS:**

### **Mobility device – means;**

An assistive device that augments mobility for a person with a disability such as; scooter, manual wheelchair, or power wheelchair.

### **Disability – means;**

- “a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“handicap”).”

### **Barrier – means;**

anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice; (“obstacle”).