

## UNIVERSITY SIDEWALK CONSIDERATION

### Report & Recommendation

12 February 2024

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#### Overview & Recommendation

The following is a summary of items related to the possible construction of a new sidewalk along University Avenue. The limits on University Avenue are from Old Elm Road on the north to Old Trail and on Old Trail to the west side of Summit Avenue, tying into the existing sidewalk on the west side of Summit Avenue.

Based on public feedback and interest to evaluate sidewalk connectivity, it is recommended that the City pursue an engineering survey to include a tree impact assessment. Further recommendations are set forth in the Recommendation paragraph on page 3 of this report. Residents have expressed stress and concern with consideration of a sidewalk in the subject area. It is staff's intention to move forward in an expeditious manner, while providing transparent and comprehensive information to the public.

#### Summary of 2023 Letter & eNews Information Distributed to Residents

- Leading up to and following the 2023 construction of new curbs and asphalt on University Avenue, City staff received multiple inquiries regarding the installation of sidewalks on the street. In response, the City solicited general feedback from residents on their interest to the construction of a sidewalk. The 2020 Local Streets New Sidewalk Installation Guideline provides a process for a resident volunteer to initiate a formal request to the City. This process was not used for the 2023 request for feedback.
- The new sidewalk could be considered on either the north or south sides of the street (east and west on University and north and south on Old Trail).
- Mid-October 2023, a letter was mailed to 112 residents requesting feedback concerning sidewalks on University Avenue and Old Trail.
  - Information included general sidewalk specifications.
  - Noted a lack of a response may be interpreted as in support of the new sidewalk.
- Mid-October 2023 the City also issued a feedback request via the City's eNews platform:
  - Included similar information as the letter.
  - Provided an opportunity for residents throughout the City to provide feedback.

Feedback from residents indicated, 'Yes' in favor of the sidewalk installation and 'No' for not in favor. The results showed a relatively even split from 'affected' residents (those that reside in proposed sidewalk area) between Yes (30), No (33), and those that choose not to respond (31):

	Yes	No	Total
All Email Responses Received	55	42	97
Removed Duplicate Votes for Same Address	50	36	86
"Non-Affected" Residents	20	3	23
"Affected" Resident's Responses - reside in proposed sidewalk area*	30	33	63
	50	36	86

- \* 1. No feedback from 31 affected resident addresses.  
2. For two addresses, City received two conflicting (yes/no) votes from each; included in tally.  
3. Two residents noted interest in a sidewalk on the eastside only.  
4. One resident noted interest in a sidewalk only on one side of the street, but did not specify the side.

On behalf of North Shore School District #112, Superintendent Dr. Michael Lubelfeld responded ‘Yes’ to the survey and his response was included in the “Non-Affected” Residents column based on proximity of Wayne Thomas Elementary School and Northwood Middle School.

### Speed Study on University Avenue

The City’s Police Department conducted a speed study in June and July of 2023. The current speed limit on University Avenue is 25 mph. The study shows 11 total enforceable violations, the 85th percentile speed at 26 mph and the average speed at 22 mph. The fastest speed recorded was 47 mph and the slowest was 8 mph. The results of the study were not indicative of a speeding issue and are in-line with what is typically found on Highland Park residential streets.

### Past Sidewalk Survey Results

In 2017, a resident in the Highlands neighborhood took the role of lead resident and conducted a survey using the 2016 Local Sidewalk Installation Policy that was in place at that time. The 2016 policy required 75% support from residents on the same side of the street where the sidewalk is proposed for construction

- Survey included University Avenue, Hyacinth Place, and Western Avenue
- Results of the completed survey indicated 75% of residents supported the sidewalk installation.

In 2019, a counter-survey (or petition) was completed by two residents on University Avenue

- Results of the counter-petition showed significantly decreased support for the installation of sidewalks with 57% of residents opposed to the installation.

In October 2019, Public Works held an Open House to invite resident input and show a preliminary sidewalk design.

- Following the meeting, Staff sent a survey to “affected residents”, defined as property-owners directly adjacent to and abutting, on the same side of the street as the right-of-way within which the proposed sidewalk is contemplated to be installed.
- Final results showed the majority of respondents did not favor the installation of a sidewalk.
- A provision in the 2016 adopted Sidewalk Policy notes that a lack of required support will cause the petition for the sidewalk to be tabled for a 3-year period. This prevents the same request from being resubmitted until after the 3-year period has expired.

## 2020 Local Streets New Sidewalk Installation Guideline

- In March 2020, an updated draft policy was reviewed at a Committee of the Whole meeting.
- Local Streets New Sidewalk Installation Guideline was approved by City Council on September 29, 2020.
- Changes from the 2016 Policy include:
  - Document changed to a Guideline.
  - Provides a more structured process for residents to follow to submit a sidewalk request, including a timeline for submittal (within 90 days of Notice of Intent).
  - Provides additional details on Project Prioritization, Exemptions to New Sidewalk Guideline, and New Sidewalk Funding, Construction, and Timeline.
  - Establishes templates to be used by lead resident to gather signatures to help ensure residents have a clear understanding of the proposed sidewalk installation.
  - Reduces required residential support from 75% to 51% of affected residents.
  - Following confirmation of required homeowners' approval, the City initiates design of conceptual engineering plans. Plans highlight impacts to parkway trees, driveway aprons, and other hardscape or landscape items within the right-of-way.
  - The City holds a neighborhood meeting to share information and solicit feedback. Following the meeting, the City sends follow-up survey to confirm support.
  - Failure of any affected owners to deliver to the City a response to the City's follow-up survey is considered as favoring the installation of the proposed sidewalk.
  - If insufficient proof of support within 90 days, the proposed installation may not be re-proposed for a period of 3-years.
  - City Council reserves the right to approve and fund the construction of sidewalks in City-owned rights-of-way, even if such sidewalks are either ineligible for the procedures or not approved in accordance with the 2020 Guideline.

## MoveHP Alignment

In 2012, the City adopted Bike Walk HP 2030, the City's comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan. In 2020, MoveHP was adopted as an update to Bike-Walk HP 2030. MoveHP sets forth goals, objectives and strategies for a comprehensive and connected non-motorized transportation system. It proposes that the City of Highland Park plan for improvements to the City's street and transportation system that will serve all transportation users: cyclists, pedestrians, transit users and drivers, regardless of age or ability. Two specific initiative in MoveHP related to the University sidewalk consideration:

- Review and revise as appropriate the Local Streets New Sidewalk Installation Guideline as recommended in the MoveHP Plan (Goal 1: Objective 4).
- Installation of a sidewalk on University Avenue falls within MoveHP recommendation for pedestrian improvements. The plan notes that students living within 1.5 miles of a North Shore School District 112 school are not eligible to take the school bus. Focused infrastructure improvements should be directed toward creating safe walking environments for students.

## Recommendations

Upon review of the public feedback and in light of public considerations, further evaluation is recommended in order to bring forth a comprehensive report and recommendation to the City Council.

1. Information will be provided to all residents who provided their contact information for the survey and an update in enews will be included for the general public. Information will also be posted to the City's web site pertaining to the sidewalk evaluation and next steps.
2. Complete an engineering design for a potential sidewalk installation on University Avenue. A completed design would include an assessment of trees and landscaping in the subject area.
3. Provide information to residents following the completion of the sidewalk design. Information shared to include impacts on trees and vegetation.
4. Present information to the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) at a public meeting.
5. Schedule an Open House to further discuss the design and answer questions. With the completed design, questions and concerns specific to residential properties may be addressed.
6. Conduct final formal survey of residents to gauge interest.
7. After preliminary engineering and public feedback, staff will bring information to City Council with a recommendation concerning new sidewalks on University Avenue.
8. City Council will review and make a determination for a future capital project.