



May 28, 2015

Simcoe Reformer

Letter to the Editor

## **Sidewalks: The Great Debate**

On behalf of Norfolk Pathways for People, I am writing in response to two news items: “Residents hopeful council will reverse decision” and “Trees to remain on Argyle Ave.”, published May 25<sup>th</sup> and May 28<sup>th</sup>, respectively, in the Simcoe Reformer.

First, let me introduce Norfolk Pathways for People, a community coalition that advocates for the development and improvement of connected pathways in Norfolk County. Our objectives include:

- Advocating for new and improved trails and pathways [which include sidewalks] in Norfolk County.
- Building a healthier, accessible and connected community.

Argyle Avenue in Delhi is slated for road reconstruction in 2015. The Public Works Department design plan includes a sidewalk on the north side of Argyle Ave. In 2014, Phase 1 of the project from James St. to Churchill Ave. had a sidewalk added with the intent that the later phases would continue the connectivity to the east end where the new subdivision is under construction. The south side of Argyle Ave. is industrial with multiple entrances and truck traffic. The sidewalk would provide a safe alternative to walking on the south side where pedestrians would be exposed to industrial traffic.

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, Council in Committee voted in favour of the sidewalk installation, spurring more discussion with area residents. Reasons cited against sidewalk installation include small lot size and removal of trees.

Residents and Council need to keep in mind that lot size, large or small, is reflected in property tax bills. Smaller lot = lower property taxes. The proposed location for the sidewalk is on county-owned road allowance. It isn't private property.

With respect to the tree issue, trees are a renewable resource. People are not.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, Council reversed their decision. No sidewalk for Argyle Avenue.

The importance of sidewalks in our communities cannot be stressed enough. Community design best practices put the safety of ALL residents first. Sidewalks create an environment that supports more walking – for those who choose to walk rather than drive and for those who have no alternative due to



## PROMOTING pathways

FOR WALKING AND CYCLING IN NORFOLK

age, ability or cost. Walking is recognized as the only mode of travel that is universally affordable, and allows children and youth, older adults and people using mobility aids, to travel independently.

Speaking of age... According to the 2014 Population Projection Study, Norfolk County, like many rural communities in Ontario, has a higher than provincial average proportion of older aged residents, with 19% of the County's current population over age 65, and 35% over 55. Within Norfolk, the communities of Port Dover, Simcoe and Delhi have the highest proportion of older residents.

Pathways for People requests that:

1. Council members who voted against a sidewalk explain their rationale for doing so and how they would respond to the need to provide a safe route for pedestrians of all ages and abilities.
2. Council reconsider this decision and, in future, consider the greater good of the community and its residents as a whole when making these legacy decisions.

Respectfully,

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