

New sidewalk considered to connect Library Square with Town Park

Connecting Library Square to Town Park is one of the long-standing visions for Aurora's Cultural Precinct. But how to achieve this has been a question for almost as long.

The answer, however, might be a new sidewalk on the north side of Metcalfe Street from Victoria Street in the west to Wells Street in the north.

This is the option Council is due to consider this week, according to a report from Anca Mihail, Manager of Engineering for the Town of Aurora.

The recommendation nixes a previously-proposed pathway through the parking lot of Trinity Anglican Church and the property belonging to the apartment building lying immediately north of the place of worship.

The investigation revealed that the most feasible location for a connecting walkway through private properties is along the landscaped area to the north of the Trinity Anglican Church parking lot and out to Wells Street through the adjacent 68 Wells Street property, she said. However, even this most feasible walkway location is not recommended due to numerous constraints and conflicts.

Among these challenges were relocating existing lamp posts, restrictions in width, and the adverse impact a pathway would have for parking servicing the 12-unit apartment building.

A parking lot along the north side of Metcalfe also has challenges, but these are less detrimental, said Ms. Mihail.

During the Trinity Anglican Church property investigation, staff identified the construction of a 1.5 metre wide sidewalk with a boulevard along the north side of Metcalfe Street, she said. There is an existing sidewalk on the south side of Metcalfe Street. However, a sidewalk on the north side would provide a more direct route between Library Square and Town Park. The church parking lot entrance and the driveway for 72 Wells Street are the only entrances that would be impacted by a new sidewalk along this stretch of Metcalfe Street. However, should Council decide not to proceed with the sidewalk as proposed by staff, there are existing less direct connections between Library Square and Town Park.

The benefits of a new sidewalk on the north side of Metcalfe Street, as opposed to a connecting walkway through private property [include]: the sidewalk is located within the existing municipal right of way, which significantly reduces the cost and no easements, property takings, or property owner negotiations and agreements would be required; the sidewalk would direct pedestrians to crosswalks at all intersections, which eliminates the need for mid-block crosswalks that are generally not recommended; and the sidewalk would improve pedestrian access from Metcalfe Street to the Trinity Anglican Church building, as well as improve access to the existing mailboxes located on the north side of Metcalfe Street.

If staff ultimately approves the sidewalk project this month, it is proposed that the design work would be carried out in-house for the end of the year. At that point, any costs would be contingent on the 2022 Capital Budget. The end result, if completed, would be 1.5 metres wide for a length of 155 metres.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter