

Sidewalk Width Standard on Local Roads - Update

ISSUE

The Administration is providing an update on the implementation of a wider sidewalk width standard for local roads as per the Active Transportation Plan.

BACKGROUND

At its Regular Business Meeting held on June 27, 2016, City Council approved the Active Transportation Plan (AT Plan). As part of the AT Plan, the City committed to the following action items:

- Action 1A.1: Update sidewalk requirements for new developments. This action was included under the theme of connectivity.
- Action 4B.3: Consider complete street designs in development of new neighbourhoods, employment areas and for major infill projects. This action was included under the theme of land use and growth.

The AT Plan identified a sidewalk width for local roads of 1.8 metres. The previous sidewalk width standard was 1.05 metres for rolled curb and 1.2 metres for vertical curb.

At its Regular Business Meeting held on October 23, 2017, City Council approved the Complete Streets Design and Policy Guide. Highlights of the guide include:

- The Guide provides information on how Saskatoon's streets can be designed for all modes and users of all ages and abilities.
- The Guide is a supporting document of the Growth Plan to Half a Million.
- The Guide includes principles on street design that complement land use and consider the transportation system as a whole.
- The Guide includes a toolkit of street treatments that provides options for consideration by designers based on the intended function of the street.
- The Guide includes the identification of implementation opportunities which includes programs, processes, policies, and monitoring.

At its Regular Business Meeting held on December 17, 2018, City Council approved Council Policy C07-030, Street Design Policy. Highlights of the policy include:

- To improve safety and accessibility for all road users and provide guidance on how to incorporate Complete Streets concepts into the planning, design, construction of new streets, and reconstruction of existing streets.
- To integrate best practices of universal design throughout all elements of the right of way.
- To guide operations and maintenance of existing and new streets to support the movement of people of all ages, abilities, and levels of mobility along streets.

Universal design is defined as the design and composition of a street so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless

of their age, ability or disability, in the most independent and natural manner possible without the need for adaptation, modification, assistance, or specialized devices.

The City of Saskatoon's website includes the following statements regarding accessibility.

"The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the City of Saskatoon support the concept of universal design."

"Addressing barriers is not only about the provision of barrier-free, equitable lifestyles for people currently living with disabilities. It is also about future planning. Saskatchewan has an aging population and due to medical advancements people are living longer. We need to proactively plan for the future."

"Accessibility should not just be a matter of whether or not it is possible for persons with disabilities to perform tasks, but also whether it is possible to perform tasks in a dignified and easy way."

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the City of Saskatoon endorse the concept of substantive equality which strives for equal rights and opportunities and the recognition of the dignity and worth of every person."

CURRENT STATUS

For City-led projects such as the Public Transportation Infrastructure Fund (PTIF) sidewalk projects delivered in 2017 and 2018, all new sidewalks for local roads (missing sidewalks) were built to the 1.8 metre width outlined in the Active Transportation Plan. No City-led new sidewalk projects (missing sidewalks) on local roads were constructed in 2019.

For developer-led projects, such as greenfield neighbourhood development, the following processes and consultations with the development community were undertaken, resulting in a revision to the current sidewalk width on local roads:

- February 21, 2019 – Street Design Discussion at the Developer Liaison Committee (DLC):
 - At that time a sidewalk width of 1.8 metres for local roads was the City's preferred requirement.
 - An implementation date of January 1, 2020 was suggested.
 - The DLC had several questions and points requesting further consideration related to the 1.8 metre sidewalk width for local roads. Most specifically questions about the true need for the full 1.8 metre sidewalks and noting consideration of impacts on affordability of lots, as well as interest in the approaches other jurisdictions were taking with regards to sidewalk widths
- March 1, 2019 – Follow up memo provided to the DLC with responses to questions and points of consideration raised at the February 21, 2019 meeting, and an

indication the 1.8 metre wide sidewalk requirement for local roads would be maintained.

- Late 2019 – following additional discussions with the members of the DLC and additional research from other municipalities and accessibility standards, the City made a determination to modify the sidewalk width to 1.5 metres for local roads and provided a suggested implementation date of January 1, 2021.
- Late 2020 – DLC members requested additional discussion on rationale for the 1.5 metre sidewalk width for local roads and requested a reconsideration on the implementation date of January 1, 2021.
- January 14, 2021 – Directors of Transportation, Planning and Development, and Construction and Design; General Managers of Transportation and Construction, and Community Services met with several representatives of the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders Association (SRHBA) to discuss sidewalk widths and an implementation strategy. A primary issue discussed was the requirement of the sidewalk width of 1.5 metres needing to apply to all local roads, and the further requirement to have 1.5 metre sidewalks on both sides of the local roads.
- February 4, 2021 – The same group of people met to further discuss. Productive engagement, discussions and information exchange took place. Consensus was not achieved for the 1.5 metre sidewalk width for all local roads or the implementation plan, but an understanding was reached that the sidewalk standard width of 1.5 metres for local roads would apply in all new developments. To allow more time for the development industry to plan and prepare for the change, an extended implementation date starting in the 2022 construction season was confirmed.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

There are many technical resources that support a minimum sidewalk width of 1.5 metres.

1. TAC (Transportation Association of Canada)
 - Geometric Design Guide states, “The practical lower limit of the width of the pedestrian through zone is 1.5 metres. This is the minimum width required for two pedestrians to pass each other, or for a wheelchair user to turn around (180 degree). If the pedestrian through zone is narrower than 1.5 metres, it loses much of its capability to support two-way travel.”
 - An illustration of space required to operate mobility aids, which contributed to the decision to widen sidewalks is shown in Appendix 1.
 - An illustration of 1.5 metres being the minimum width that is generally required for two adults to walk side-by-side down the street is shown in Appendix 2.
2. NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials)
 - Desired minimum through zone of 6 feet, absolute minimum of 5 feet (1.52 metres).
 - Adjacent to traffic, desired minimum is 8 feet to allow for a buffer.

3. FHWA (Federal Highway Administration (United States))

- Require a minimum width of 5 feet (1.52 metres) if set back from the curb or 6 feet if at the curb face.

The cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Winnipeg, Brandon, and Warman all have a minimum sidewalk width of 1.5 metres for local roads. The recently adopted Transportation Master Plan for the City of Regina identifies an objective of 1.5 metre sidewalk widths.

The considered adjustment of the sidewalk width from 1.8 to 1.5 metres came about following consultations with DLC as well as additional research, and provides a balance between accessibility and affordability. Goals of improved accessibility and meeting universal design descriptions are met, and by not moving to a 1.8 metre wide sidewalk reduces the financial cost implication.

The Administration is proceeding to implement the new sidewalk requirements for all new neighbourhood detailed design submissions. The next step is to provide the development industry formal confirmation that the sidewalk width for local roads is 1.5 metres. For all sidewalks to be constructed in 2022, all detailed designs submitted for review and approval, will be required to reflect a sidewalk width of 1.5 metres for local roads.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of widening the sidewalk to 1.5 metres on local roads are provided in the following table:

Walk & Curb Type	\$ per linear metre (current sidewalk widths)	\$ per linear metre (adjusted sidewalk widths)	\$ increase per linear metre	\$ per average lot ¹ (current sidewalk widths)	\$ per average lot (adjusted sidewalk widths)	\$ increase per average lot
Current Combined Vertical Curb Standard Walk (1.2 m to 1.5 m Width)	322.88	378.23	55.35	4,920.69	5,764.22	843.53
Current Combined Rolled Curb Standard Walk (1.05 m to 1.5 m Width)	341.33	424.35	83.02	5,201.87	6,467.09	1,265.23
Current Standard Separate Walk (1.2 m to 1.5 m Width)	221.40	276.75	55.35	3,374.14	4,217.67	843.53

Note 1 - Assumed average lot width is 50 feet or 15.24 metres.

For reference, the Canadian Real Estate Association website on March 24, 2021 indicated that the MLS® Home Price Index (HPI) is \$330,100 in Saskatoon.

Typically, for sidewalk infill programs these additional costs are funded through the appropriate capital program, and for new sidewalk in greenfield development these additional costs are funded by the developer.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

A social implication is providing for universal accessibility by providing wider sidewalks.

There are no privacy or legal implications of this report. Environmental implications were not reviewed as part of the preparation of this report.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps are to provide the development industry a confirmation that:

- The sidewalk width for local roads is 1.5 metres.
- Detailed designs received for review and approval for construction in 2022 must reflect a sidewalk width of 1.5 metres for local roads.

APPENDICES

1. Space required to operate mobility aids
2. Minimum width that is generally required for two adults to walk side-by-side down the street

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