

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

- MEMORANDUM -

TO: Jessica Keller, Assistant Director, Public Works Department

DATE: March 22, 2018

FROM: Mark R. Brown, Public Works Department

SUBJECT: University Dr. Public Meeting Minutes – March 21st, 2018

CC: Eduardo Santamaria, Director, Public Works Department

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- Coral Gables Public Works staff delivered a PowerPoint presentation detailing a proposal for sidewalks on both sides of the street. The presentation included a project timeline, conceptual renderings, and information about the ballot process and details about the history of the project.
 - A city ballot distributed in 2017 approved sidewalks for both sides of the street, with “yes” garnering 83% of the total vote between both sides, including unreturned ballots counted as “yes”. When tallying only returned ballots, 76% of the ballots were in favor of sidewalks.
 - The Q and A session after the presentation included the following comments:
 - Some residents preferred sidewalks on only one side of the street. Staff explained pedestrians, particularly the elderly and disabled, shouldn’t have to cross the street if they want to walk on a sidewalk
 - A resident asked about the possibility of a sidewalk on one side of the street and a bike path on the other
 - A resident had a concern about sidewalk installation abutting an existing fence. Staff stated that specific alignment issues will be addressed during the design phase
 - A resident spoke in support of sidewalks. Currently, people walk in the street and it’s dangerous for pedestrians because of high speed traffic. People also have to walk in grassy/muddy swales because of a lack of sidewalks
 - Several residents mentioned the poor condition of sidewalks on Santa Maria Ave. as a reason to oppose the proposed sidewalks. City staff immediately sent an email to inspectors to address the issue. Staff also advised that the City has an ongoing program to repair damaged sidewalks caused by City-owned trees or City activities.
 - Several residents had concerns about injury liability if someone should trip and fall on a sidewalk. Staff stated that it would be no different from sidewalks throughout other areas of the city – property owners may be liable for injuries just like they are liable now if someone should trip on a grassy swale.
 - Several residents had concerns about maintenance responsibility. Staff stated that the city will continue to repair damaged sidewalks incurred by City trees, but if a private vehicle or private tree should damage the sidewalk, that will be the owner’s responsibility. This is established in the City’s Code of Ordinances.

- One resident mentioned a second voting process the community initiated which came out against sidewalks. Staff said they would look at their ballots and assess the result.
- Some residents that originally voted for sidewalks have changed their mind stating the city did not keep them up-to-date on the process and possible liability/maintenance issues of sidewalks. The City acknowledged a delay in the process and the purpose of the meeting was to reengage. At the previous meeting, City Staff advised of maintenance responsibilities.
- One resident had concerns about plantings in public ROW being destroyed by sidewalks. Staff stated that if plantings are in public ROW, they will be removed if they're in the proposed alignment of the sidewalk. Staff also mentioned that any private improvements on the ROW should be addressed by an encroachment covenant.
- A resident spoke in favor of sidewalks. They mentioned a 2015 survey which was heavily in favor of sidewalks due to traffic safety and physical activity benefits.
- A resident had concerns about bikes using the sidewalk
- A resident who lives on a corner lot mentioned heavy traffic cutting through her driveway as well as drivers cutting the corner short and driving up on her property. The city responded that it would look at options to prevent this behavior.
- Residents mentioned they do not want more automobile traffic in the neighborhood. People drive too fast.
- Residents mentioned the city should maintain sidewalks better to avoid tripping hazards. City advised that sidewalk damage can be reported and staff will inspect and safe-up sidewalks. The City has over 200 miles of sidewalks so reporting is important. If the damaged sidewalk is the responsibility, it will be repaired. If the sidewalk is the responsibility of the property owner then a letter is issued, requiring repair.
- Residents want to maintain as much tree canopy as possible. Staff responded that the sidewalks will avoid mature trees and relocate small trees.
- Residents asked about the next steps. Staff responded that the city will continue to take feedback from residents and design will move forward in mid-2018.
- One resident stated that they did not want more pedestrians in their neighborhood due to new sidewalks as well as did not want to change the property they originally bought without sidewalks.
- One resident mentioned traffic has increased on University Dr. after installation of traffic calming on Granada.
- One resident mentioned sidewalks should be installed on both sides of the street if they're going to be constructed at all.
- One resident stated that they preferred people walk in the street adjacent to traffic
- One resident asked to clarify whether the project is a "done deal". City Staff responded that the community input provided at the meeting will be taken under consideration before moving forward.