

Draft information on Sidewalks in response to 5/24 CC meeting

At the May 24th City Council meeting, the Council discussed the application of 8 foot sidewalks with comments on both reducing the width to help reduce possible tree impacts, and for maintaining the width acknowledging the higher pedestrian traffic and placemaking the wider sidewalks provide. As a follow up to that meeting, this note provides some background on sidewalk widths and flexibility in the standards that minimize impact to property, including trees.

As Council noted, the TMP identifies sidewalk widths as a minimum of 5 feet in front of single family residences (SFR) and a minimum of 8 feet for all other land uses. The EDM sets the actual standards. A couple of key items worth noting from the EDM:

1. The Street Matrix in Appendix E also provides more detail on roadway cross-sections for roadway segments/corridors including sidewalk widths. On some corridors, such as 185th street, where we have a mix of development we have defined a specific sidewalk width for the corridor of 8 feet. Townhouse development is considered SFR but based on the intended use of the corridor a consistent 8' sidewalk is more appropriate than jumping from 6' to 8' depending on if it's a townhouse or an apartment. Staff reviews these cross-sections as needed and revisions are made, if needed, annually as part of the Engineering Development Manual update.
2. The EDM has been revised to have a minimum sidewalk width of 6'. This follows guidance to provide adequate width for two wheelchairs to be able to pass each other within the sidewalk.

Staff continues to remain flexible in balancing sidewalks with tree protection, parking and bike lanes. Reductions in sidewalk width to protect trees are typically utilized in spot locations and not along a full corridor or segment. It is worth noting, that reducing a sidewalk width from 8' to 6' is often not enough to protect or preserve a tree. Staff also utilizes other tools such as reducing/eliminating the amenity zone where appropriate to reduce impacts to trees. As identified through the February 5th Council Strategic Workshop, staff will be making revisions to the 2022 EDM to clarify and encourage these types of adjustments to protect/preserve trees.

Attached is the "Street Trees in the Right-of-Way - Regulations, Summary and Options" memo presented at the February 5th Council Strategic Workshop which provides some additional information on this issue.