



June 6, 2024

Toronto and East York Community Council
Attention: Community Council Administrator
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Esteemed Members of the Community Council Committee,

RE: Toronto and East York Community Council Meeting – June 11, 2024
Avenue Road Study

We believe the Avenue Road Study is off to a positive start and thank the City of Toronto for undertaking such a crucial public safety initiative. However, from Amica Senior Lifestyles perspective, which is rooted in concern for the city's rapidly aging population, we would advocate to implement more permanent measures to protect pedestrians in Phase I, while expediting similar measures for Phase II. Specifically, we are seeking the reconstruction and widening of the Avenue Road sidewalks between Davenport and St. Clair. Doing so will create a safer environment for all ages and provide barrier-free access for those living with mobility challenges. While we recognize the standard approach to reconstructing sidewalks typically occurs during major road work, the rapidly aging population in this community cannot wait 10 years for this work to be completed as currently projected.

The population around Avenue Road is growing older and includes four retirement residences in the area. For example, in a 5 km. radius around our current redevelopment of Amica Balmoral at Avenue Road, there will be approximately 76,500 residents aged 70 years and older by 2028 – and these numbers will continue to rise exponentially. Walking, for this cohort, is a fundamental activity to sustain overall wellness and connectedness with community. However, this vulnerable populace will face increasing challenges to safely walk outdoors while trying to navigate the narrow and obstructed sidewalks of Avenue Road.

In the 2022 study, [The Right to Walk in the Neighborhood: Designing Inclusive Sidewalks for Older Adults](#), by Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, it states

“Sidewalks are the most public neighborhood spaces” ... which, “enable walking, an essential activity for performing everyday chores and reaching neighborhood destinations.”

All ages and all mobilities should have the right to safely access and enjoy public neighbourhood spaces. A built environment should therefore facilitate secure walking and connection within community. Permanent, wider, and thus safer, sidewalks along Avenue Road must be made a priority infrastructure project.

We acknowledge and support the proposed improvements outlined in the current Avenue Road Study, particularly the following:

- Reducing Avenue Road from six lanes to four, and where feasible adding additional turning lanes.
 - This will help reduce vehicular speed and in turn save lives.
- Installing a “signalized” pedestrian crossing at Ramsden Park.
 - Many seniors visit this outdoor amenity, and thus require supportive, safe passage to do so. While we are pleased that the Avenue Road Study proposes this pedestrian crossing, we understand funding is not currently identified for it. **We therefore respectfully urge Council to secure funding for this upgrade within Phase I.**
- And, making safety improvements in front of the Church of Messiah.
 - A necessary measure to keep seniors safe who walk to the food bank here.

We believe, however, that the following proposed interim improvement requires more immediate attention, further development, and investment by Council:

- Instituting pedestrian safety improvements by including road-level pedestrian space, buffer space between active motor vehicle lanes and the sidewalk, and intersection improvements.

This interim measure may work within the budget assigned, but we believe it does not go far enough to protect lives nor facilitate accessibility for vulnerable citizens.

AMICA

SENIOR LIFESTYLES

Pedestrians navigating the proposed interim measures for Avenue Road would have to contend with multiple grade changes, as well as the still narrow, often-obstructed sidewalks. Hazards like these could compound risks for pedestrians, including a potential increase in falls. One of the greatest risks to the overall health and wellness for seniors is falling. According to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#), it is estimated that between 20% and 30% of seniors fall each year. It is highly concerning, therefore, to think about the possible increase of falls by the rising senior population in this area. Sidewalk safety must be regarded as a public health priority.

Lastly, we respectfully request that you consider the cost of the proposed interim measures for pedestrian safety against the additional future costs for permanent solutions. Council, we ask of you, is it not a more prudent use of tax dollars to upgrade the investment now and build wider, fully accessible sidewalks for Avenue Road that ensure the safety of all pedestrians? Let's not spend more. Rather, let's do the right thing now and get the sidewalks rebuilt.

Thank you for receiving our concerns, and for supporting the initiative of the Avenue Road Study. We urge you to embrace the "right to walk in the neighbourhood" along Avenue Road without further delay.

Sincerely,



Derek Coss,
Chief Development Officer

Cc: Councillor Josh Matlow
Councillor Diane Saxe
Avenue Road Safety Coalition
Doug MacLatchy, Chief Executive Officer, Amica Senior Lifestyles