

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of August 5, 2015

**SUBJECT: Racquet Club of Ann Arbor Public Sidewalk Waiver
(3010 Hickory Lane)**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Racquet Club of Ann Arbor's request for a waiver from the requirement to install public sidewalks along the Geddes Avenue and Hickory Lane (south of entry drive) frontages.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the requested waiver from the installation of public sidewalk along Geddes Avenue be **supported**. Based on detailed information provided by the petitioner's engineer, staff concurs that the constraints of slope, utility poles and a fire hydrant make the costs of sidewalk installation excessively disproportionate to the probable use of this segment of sidewalk.

Further, staff recommends that the waiver from the installation of a public sidewalk along Hickory Lane, south of the Racquet Club of Ann Arbor entry drive, be **supported**, because creating this short length of sidewalk at this time will provide very limited facilities with no system value in the near and intermediate term.

STAFF REPORT

Staff previously recommended postponement of this sidewalk waiver petition to allow staff the opportunity to review the petitioner's cost analysis of a 8-foot wide public sidewalk in the Geddes Avenue right-of-way and the petitioner an opportunity to explore a 4-foot wide alternative design. Earlier this week, the petitioner submitted documentation about the feasibility of a 4-foot wide sidewalk alternative. These two alternatives are discussed below.

Full Width Alternative

The petitioner submitted calculations to demonstrate this sidewalk is excessively disproportionate in cost compared to the sidewalk being constructed by the City on the north side of Geddes Avenue. The estimated cost of an 8-foot back-of-curb sidewalk fronting the Racquet Club of Ann Arbor site is approximately \$218,000, or \$571 per lineal foot. This estimate is derived by relocating overhead lines, temporary poles to continue service, relocation of underground utilities, light poles, retaining walls, grading and fencing. In comparison, the proposed City installed sidewalk is estimated to cost \$380 per lineal foot.

Reduced Width Alternative

The petitioner provided the dimensions available between the 2 utility poles, 3 light poles and a fire hydrant located on south side of Geddes Avenue and the Racquet Club fence on the north property line. Based on this information, staff determined that this alternative sidewalk would range in width from 2.5 feet to 5.2 feet within the right-of-way. The petitioner declined to provide a sidewalk concept that would encroach on private property, due the location of a stand of mature and landmark trees along the north property line.

STAFF COMMENTS

Project Management - The City's Geddes Avenue design consultant, HRC, concurs that the proposed sidewalk in the right-of-way would be difficult to install due to the location of utilities (regardless of width).

Planning – Any waiver of public sidewalk requirement along the Geddes Avenue or Hickory Lane sidewalk segments would be limited to the current site plan proposal. Future site plans for the Racquet Club of Ann Arbor would require the sidewalk(s) to be constructed or a new waiver granted by City Council. At that time, the northern Geddes Avenue sidewalk will be either under construction or completed, giving staff additional information on the use and need for this southern Geddes Ave sidewalk link.

Prepared by Christopher Cheng
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson
8/5/15

Attachments: 4-foot Alternative Sidewalk Memo

c: Project Management
Systems Planning
File No. SP14-065



August 4, 2015

City of Ann Arbor
301 East Huron Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48107
Attn: Chris Cheng

RE: Ann Arbor Racquet Club – 4' Geddes Road Sidewalk

Dear Chris,

At the recommendation of City officials we have done a preliminary examination of the feasibility of installation of a four foot wide pedestrian walkway along the south side of Geddes Road in the ROW immediately adjacent to the Ann Arbor Racquet Club. While it is technically possible to install some form of walkway in this area, the six fixed utility structures in this area greatly comprise the desirability of the improvement. Most notably are the short-comings in the clearance from these objects. The clear span between these utilities and the property line from west to east is as follows:

- Light pole 3.4'
- Utility pole 5.2'
- Light pole 3.5'
- Hydrant 4.0'
- Utility pole 3.7'
- Light pole 2.5'

Installation of the walk between the utilities and the back of curb is more difficult due to sharp grade changes that occur immediately off the back of curb that would require the alteration or relocation of the utilities due to the grade change.

We would be happy do discuss this in greater detail at your convenience or at the planning commission meeting.

Sincerely,

Scott W. Betzoldt, PE
MIDWESTERN CONSULTING, LLC

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Ann Arbor Racquet Club public sidewalk waiver request be **postponed** to allow the petitioner and staff additional time to address staff comments. If these issues are able to be addressed prior to the meeting, staff will provide an updated staff report and recommendation.

STAFF REPORT

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Racquet Club Ann Arbor site plan on March 17, 2015 and recommended denial of the Club's request to waive the public sidewalk requirement along Hickory Lane and Geddes Avenue. Subsequent to the Planning Commission meeting, the petitioner revised the site plan to respond to Commission concerns by including the sidewalk segment along Hickory Lane from the main entrance drive north to Geddes Avenue. At its July 20, 2015 meeting, City Council approved the site plan but postponed action on the sidewalk waiver request and referred the revised sidewalk proposal back to the Planning Commission for its review and recommendation of the remaining two sidewalk segments.

The proposed Hickory Lane sidewalk runs along the west side of the Racquet Club Ann Arbor site and includes a new crosswalk across Geddes Avenue to enable pedestrians the right-of-way to access a proposed sidewalk on the opposite side of the street. The Geddes Avenue sidewalk, which will be constructed on the north side of road, is currently under design as part of a road reconstruction project and will extend westward towards the Gallup Park entrance. This sidewalk is expected to be built in 2016 as part of the Geddes Avenue Improvement Project, which is recommended in the Capital Improvements Plan.

Staff has been meeting with the petitioner since the postponement by City Council to explore cost effective sidewalk options along the property's frontage on the south side of Geddes Avenue. This segment would link the proposed Hickory Lane sidewalk to the Huron Parkway entrance ramp, which is no longer used by vehicles and has been converted into a shared use path.

At the time this staff report was written, the petitioner was preparing a cost analysis for constructing a segment of sidewalk in the Geddes Avenue right-of-way. This proposed sidewalk would likely require retaining walls, utility and light pole relocations, and a fire hydrant relocation. The petitioner is also exploring whether a reduced 4-foot wide sidewalk between the existing utility poles and the property line could be accomplished. It is anticipated additional cost analysis and an alternative sidewalk location layout will be available for the August 5th meeting.

Connecting the site along Geddes and providing sidewalk from Geddes Avenue southerly along Hickory Lane as far as the main entrance of the facility is a requirement that will assure safe and direct means of pedestrian access to and from this development. The City Standards and Specifications requires sidewalks to be provided along the site's entire frontage, a sidewalk extended southerly along Hickory Lane beyond the site entrance would have very limited utility. Currently, Hickory Lane south of this site and the entire residential sector of the city has been developed without sidewalks. Creating this short length of sidewalk extending along Hickory Lane will provide very limited facilities with no system value in the near and intermediate term. When the surrounding residential area is served with sidewalks, this missing sidewalk link is to be included as a key element of the pedestrian system linking northerly to Geddes Avenue and beyond.

STAFF COMMENTS

Systems Planning - Staff continues to support construction of a sidewalk along Geddes Avenue and Hickory Lane as The Public Services Standards and Specifications requires sidewalks be provided on both sides of all streets in the City. The petitioner has added sidewalk to a portion of the Hickory Lane frontage, an addition that will improve connectivity to the neighborhood from Geddes, however, by not including sidewalk along the Geddes Avenue frontage, pedestrians will have to cross Geddes Avenue in order to travel east bound, then cross Geddes Avenue again to access Huron Parkway.

Planning – The Public Services Standards and Specifications require public sidewalks be provided on both sides of all streets in the City. The petitioner had originally requested the sidewalk requirement for the Geddes Avenue and Hickory Lane frontages be waived by City Council resolution.

The Non-motorized Plan recommends bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be established in new construction and reconstruction projects on both sides of a street in all urbanized areas unless the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use. Excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding twenty five percent of the cost of the larger transportation project.

The City's roadway consultant on the Geddes Avenue Improvement project, HRC, has looked at the petitioner's Geddes sidewalk concept drawings and associated costs and determined that the projected costs are within the range expected for this alignment. The petitioner's engineer is also exploring whether a narrower sidewalk can be placed within the right-of-way. These findings will be presented, if completed, at the August 5th Planning Commission meeting.

Staff also requested the petitioner show a sidewalk concept on their private property, leaving the existing utilities untouched, as an alternative connection to the Huron Parkway walkway. The petitioner has indicated this alternate path impacts 3-4 landmark trees and 10-14 non-

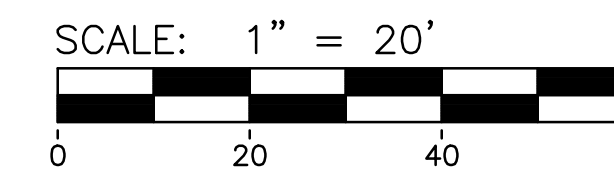
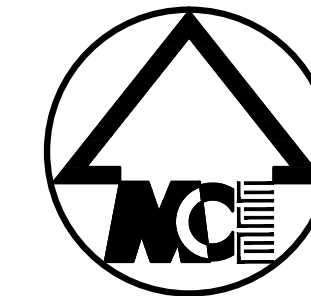
landmark trees and requires a vote by the Racquet Club membership for a property change, which would delay their project by at least a year.

Prepared by Christopher Cheng
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson
7/30/15

Attachments: Revised AARC Sidewalk Site Plan
AARC Geddes Road Photo
AARC Geddes Road Sidewalk Challenges

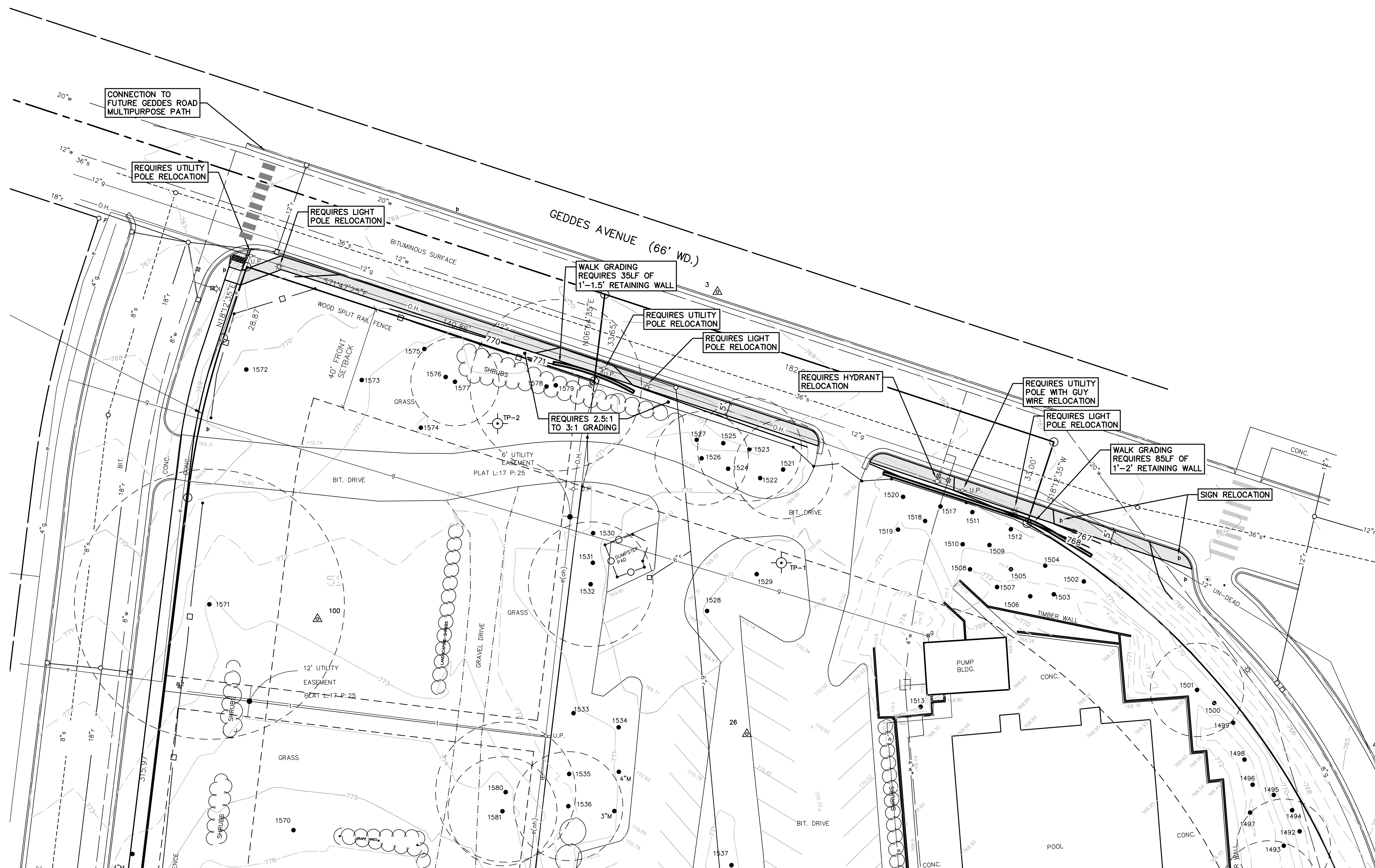
Project Management
Systems Planning
File No. SP14-065

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LEGEND

- 773 EXIST. CONTOUR
- x768.9 EXIST. SPOT ELEVATION
- U.P. EXIST. UTILITY POLE
- GP EXIST. GUY POLE
- ⊠ ELEC. TRANSFORMER
- OH EXIST. OVERHEAD UTILITY LINE
- * EXIST. LIGHT POLE
- t EXIST. TELEPHONE LINE
- e EXIST. ELECTRIC LINE
- g EXIST. GAS LINE
- w EXIST. WATER MAIN
- ⊕ EXIST. HYDRANT
- ⊠ EXIST. GATE VALVE IN BOX
- ⊠ EXIST. GATE VALVE IN WELL
- r EXIST. STORM SEWER
- EXIST. CATCH BASIN OR INLET
- ⊙ EXIST. CLEANOUT
- EXIST. SANITARY SEWER
- ⊠ SIGN
- ⊠ MAILBOX
- ⊠ TELEPHONE RISER
- ⊠ CABLE TELEVISION RISER
- ⊠ ELECTRIC METER
- ⊠ WATER METER
- ⊠ GAS METER
- ⊠ POST
- ⊠ WELL
- ⊠ FENCE
- SINGLE TREE
- ⊠ EXIST. BOULDER
- ⊠ EXIST. SPRINKLER HEAD
- ⊠ SECTION CORNER
- F FOUND IRON PIPE
- ⊠ F FOUND MONUMENT
- F IR FOUND IRON ROD
- ⊠ CONTROL PT.



The underground utilities shown have been located from field survey information and existing records. The surveyor makes no guarantees that the underground utilities shown comprise all such utilities in the area, either in-service or abandoned. The surveyor further does not warrant that the underground utilities shown are in the exact location indicated. Although the surveyor does certify that they are located as accurately as possible from the information available.

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 BRENT SCHOMAKER
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RACQUET CLUB OF ANN ARBOR
 SITE PLAN
 SIDEWALK OPTION

JOB No. 14058	DATE: 7/24/15
REVISIONS:	SHEET OF
	CADD: JAW
	ENG: JAW
	PK: SWB
	TECH: SWB
	14058-walk.dwg



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RACQUET CLUB OF ANN ARBOR
PROPOSED SIDEWALK AREA PICTURES

DATE: 7/16/15 JOB NO.: **14058**

SCALE: 1" = NTS



SHEET 1 OF 4



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RACQUET CLUB OF ANN ARBOR
PROPOSED SIDEWALK AREA PICTURES

DATE: 7/16/15 JOB NO.: **14058**

SCALE: 1" = NTS



SHEET 2 OF 4

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RACQUET CLUB OF ANN ARBOR PROPOSED SIDEWALK AREA PICTURES

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SHEET 3 OF 4



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RACQUET CLUB OF ANN ARBOR
PROPOSED SIDEWALK AREA PICTURES

DATE: 7/16/15 JOB NO.: **14058**

SCALE: 1" = NTS



SHEET 4 OF 4



AARC GEDDES ROAD SIDEWALK CHALLENGES

The Club is supportive of, and has agreed to participate in an area wide assessment district for the provision of sidewalks in the area – currently none exist in the Ann Arbor Hills area.

The Club has proposed to construct a sidewalk along Hickory Lane down to Geddes and a cross walk to get to the new Geddes Road Multi-purpose path. This is entirely consistent with what the City is providing for with the Geddes Road improvement project. The City is NOT proposing any walks along the south side of Geddes due to the presence of steep slopes, underground utilities, natural features and overhead utility lines and the high cost associated with the relocation of such.

SIDEWALK ALONG GEDDES

If a sidewalk is placed along the south side of Geddes Road there will be significant challenges to overcome and unprecedented cost associated with such.

We are asking for a waiver to provide the sidewalk along the south side of Geddes, consistent with previous waivers granted, for the following reasons:

- The ROW between the fence/property line to the back of curb is very limited. There is 8 feet to work with.
- Would require the re-location of; one hydrant, three street lights, three utility poles along with power, cable and phone lines, reconstruction of three manholes, probable removal of the fence and trees, and construction of a retaining wall.
- In the case that the existing fence is removed it is understood that the County Health Dept. will require a new fence type with no footholds.
- It would be in the most undesirable of all possible sidewalk location design scenarios;
 1. Against the back of curb
 2. Close to traffic
 3. Snow plow tailings and water splashes
- The process of planning and implementing the relocation of the overhead utilities will likely take two years before the walk could be completed. This does not work well with the construction schedule of the current Geddes Road project which is slated for completion next year.
- Prohibitive cost. Approximately \$218,000
 - \$416/lf relocate O/H utility lines. A temporary pole line will have to be constructed on AARC property to continue service while the permanent line is being buried.

\$135/lf relocate U/G utilities; light poles; retaining wall, grading, fencing and trees.

\$20/lf for the sidewalk itself.

\$571/lf total. That's \$1713 per step. (City is paying \$380/lf across street)

Memorandum

July 30, 2015

Page 2

The city has chosen to **not** construct a walk on the south side of the recently approved Geddes Road reconstruction project so the justification is unclear why a seasonal private property owner would be expected to do differently.

Our understanding is that the Geddes sidewalk is being requested by the City based on the policy stated in the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. The language in 3.1 Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel section 1. states:

“Bicycle and Pedestrian ways shall be established in new construction and reconstruction projects on both sides of a street in all urbanized areas unless one or more of two conditions are met.

a) bicyclists and pedestrian are prohibited by law from using the roadway. In this instance, a greater effort may be necessary to accommodate bicyclist and pedestrians elsewhere within the right of way or within the same transportation corridor.

b) the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use. Excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding twenty five percent of the cost of the larger transportation project.”

This language brings up a few questions as to its applicability to the Racquet Club project. First is that if the City were to follow this policy why was a sidewalk not planned on both sides of Geddes as part of the current City project per the opening sentence above? Is this portion of the City considered an “urbanized area”? Secondly, the language appears to be concerning transportation projects and clearly the Racquet Club proposal is not a transportation project. Thirdly, even if the interpretation is accepted that this language is applicable and the baseline to be used is the City Geddes project, the costs of this project far exceeds the 25% defined in section b. \$571/lf is 50% greater than even the very high priced City project across the street at \$380/lf. A typical sidewalk costs \$20/lf which, if that were to be the baseline, then the \$571/lf represents a 2,800% increase.

A privately funded public improvement needs to be a *reasonable* request for a defensible public benefit. Based on the scope of the Geddes road improvements, the City obviously doesn't feel a south side sidewalk a high priority, and the cost to construct this walk is certainly not *reasonable*. Therefore we feel justified in asking for a waiver of this request to construct a sidewalk along the south side of Geddes Road.