



ITEM SUMMARY

MEETING DATE: March 21, 2022

FROM: Kara Irwin-Ferris, AICP, Development & Neighborhood Services Director

SUBJECT: **Ordinance 2021-21, ZTA-21-06**
Sidewalk/ROW

BACKGROUND

Sidewalk width has significant implications for streetscape design and the quality of the pedestrian environment. Sidewalks that are too narrow prevent pedestrians from moving safely and comfortably. Narrow sidewalks also make it difficult or impossible to provide important additional streetscape elements and pedestrian amenities. A wide sidewalk offers pedestrians enough space to walk at their chosen pace, stand, sit, socialize, or merely enjoy their surroundings. Wider sidewalks also offer more space for landscaping and amenities, making the streetscape more useful and attractive and also acting as a buffer between traffic and pedestrians.

In addition, quality sidewalks and public spaces promote walking, whether it is to connect to transit, to buy groceries at the corner store, or from parking a vehicle or bike. Increasing the amount that Greenacres' citizens walk can improve physical and emotional wellbeing, can reduce air pollution, and can reduce the number of vehicles competing for space on streets. A well-designed public realm can also promote a sense of community and improve social capital among residents, visitors, and businesses in neighborhoods across the county. Creating an environment in which people can sit, linger, and see and be seen sets the stage for the formation of strong social bonds and a dynamic community.

Further, sidewalks require a minimum width of 5.0 feet if set back from the curb or 6.0 feet if at the curb face to meet the minimum requirements for people with disabilities. Walking is a social activity. For any two people to walk together, 5.0 feet of space is the bare minimum. In some areas, such as near schools, sporting complexes, some parks, and many shopping districts, the minimum width for a sidewalk is 8.0 feet. Thus, any existing 4.0-foot-wide sidewalks (permitted as an AASHTO minimum) often force pedestrians into the roadway in order to talk or pass other walkers. Even children walking to school find that a 4.0-foot width is not adequate.

At the same time, we are seeking an increase of the right-of-way from forty feet (40') to forty-two feet (42'). This is necessary to ensure there is sufficient right-of-way when the sidewalk width is increase a foot on each side.

The Land Development Staff has reviewed these text amendments and is recommending approval. The Planning Commission reviewed this staff-initiated text amendment on December 15, 2021, and recommended approval by a vote of 4-0. The City Council approved this petition on first reading February 7, 2022 by a vote of 5-0.

ANALYSIS

Residential subdivisions shall provide sidewalks on both sides of all streets. Sidewalks shall be provided for at the time the subdivision is approved but shall be constructed in conjunction with the development of each adjacent lot and completed before a certificate of occupancy is issued. Per the proposed zoning text amendment, sidewalks shall be at least five (5) feet wide on all local streets and shall be constructed of concrete four (4) inches thick and six (6) inches thick over access points. Sidewalks on collector and arterial streets shall be constructed pursuant to Florida Department of Transportation requirements. This is in alignment with the trend that sidewalk widths are being expanded to allow more socializing, better mobility and creating a community feeling. Five feet sidewalks are the standard for West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County as well as other municipalities. In order to accommodate the additional sidewalk width, the right-of-way width would need to be increased by two feet (2') to a total of forty-two feet (42')

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

LEGAL

Ordinance 2021-21 was prepared in accordance with all applicable state statutes and City Code Requirements.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approval of ZTA-21-06 through the adoption of Ordinance 2021-21.