

November 8th, 2014

Dewey F. Bartlett, Jr, Mayor
City of Tulsa / City Hall
175 E 2nd St
Tulsa, OK 74103

Dear Mayor Bartlett:

The undersigned recommend the City of Tulsa build a sidewalk on the east side of Riverside Drive connecting downtown Tulsa via Veterans Park to the entrance of the Gathering Place as proposed by the COT Engineering Services Department. We cite the following reasons for our recommendation:

- Building the Riverside Drive sidewalk is consistent with Tulsa's Comprehensive Plan and it will fit seamlessly into a network of public improvements in the right-of-way to serve and connect the community. We note the city does not allow neighborhoods or residents to opt out of other networks or systems like water or sewer improvements because they serve the entire community, and sidewalks should be no different.
- Tulsa's Complete Streets Policy supports the comprehensive plan by mandating that sidewalks be included in major arterial road improvement projects. Exceptions are considered only for the most compelling reasons, which have not been sufficiently provided in this case.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disabilities by calling for the removal of barriers. Denying safe, convenient access to the Gathering Place by requiring those with disabilities to take the long way around and share a trail system designed for joggers and cyclists could potentially put the City of Tulsa at risk of enforcement actions, settlement negotiations, or litigation by the Justice Department.
- The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Forcing pedestrians to needlessly take a longer route to their destination diminishes the dignity of the pedestrian experience and relegates walkers to a 2nd class status. We believe Tulsa should offer a dignified experience to all modes of transportation not just automobiles.
- Tulsa competes with other cities to attract millennials and the creative class who are increasingly attracted to communities with adequate transit options and a favorable "Walk Score." National organizations are expected to take an interest in and report on this decision. Let's send the right message to those considering Tulsa as a potential destination.
- Encouraging an active, healthier lifestyle to help reduce obesity, diabetes, and heart disease are goals of our city. We help achieve those goals by investing in infrastructure which encourages more trips by walking.
- There appears to be substantial backing for the Riverside Drive sidewalk. The few who oppose it have provided little to support their claims or concerns about public safety or increased crime. To our knowledge there have been no testimonials from transportation designers, engineers or public safety experts, nor any other convincing evidence or empirical data to question the wisdom of building the Riverside Drive sidewalk.

- The Gathering Place is projected to attract a million or more visitors a year. The decision on whether or not to build the proposed sidewalk and provide adequate pedestrian access should be made on what best serves the best interests of the public, not the private preferences of a few neighborhood residents.

Respectfully Submitted by the following organizations and individuals: