

**TO: Town Council**

**FROM: Beth Eachus, TSC Chair  
Angela Sorrell, TSC Vice Chair, PAC Chair**

**SUBJECT: PAC Recommendation to TSC for Maud Robinson Trust Sidewalk Projects**

**DATE: 3/30/21**

### **Summary**

The Transportation Safety Commission, at the recommendation of the Pedestrian Advisory Committee, recommends the Town Council vote to utilize the Maud Robinson Trust to complete all sidewalk projects proposed by the Department of Public Works, thus creating a network of interconnected streets.

Expanding Vienna's pedestrian network will advance the goals already established in Town policies and master planning for the future of Vienna. Your action to move forward with *all* proposed sidewalk projects as a pedestrian network will:

- Establish a more walkable and bikeable Vienna
- Increase pedestrian safety for all residents, today and in the future
- Facilitate the construction of ADA compliant ramps, improved intersection crosswalks, curb reconstruction, and driveway apron improvements
- Advance the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan by expanding the sidewalk network, which will benefit all Vienna citizens

### **The PAC's Role in Town Pedestrian Policy and Planning**

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) serves as an advisory body that provides citizen input and coordination in planning pedestrian infrastructure improvements and in promoting pedestrian initiatives in accordance with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan. The PAC reports to the Transportation Safety Commission (TSC) who then reviews any recommendations and reports to the Mayor and Town Council.

### **Basis for PAC's Recommendation**

The PAC's recommendation to approve all proposed sidewalk projects is made in accordance with the PAC Organizational Guidelines objective to "propose and participate in ways in which the Town of Vienna may increase its pedestrian network including connecting and expanding the existing sidewalk networks". The PAC's recommendation is consistent with and supports several of the Town's goals including:

- Comprehensive Plan Land Use Goal to "create a more walkable and bikeable Vienna"
- Comprehensive Plan Transportation Goal to "maximize safety and dependability"
- Comprehensive Plan Transportation Goal to "encourage people to walk and bicycle"
- Comprehensive Plan Economic Development Goal to "create an attractive, walkable community"

- Pedestrian Master Plan Goal to “complete walkway network with sidewalks on both sides of all streets in Vienna”
- Pedestrian Master Plan Goal to “provide high-quality, safe, and convenient pedestrian access and facilities”
- Pedestrian Master Plan Goal to partner with Safe Routes to School and “encourage school children to walk and bike to school as a way to promote healthy living, as well as decrease traffic and pollution”

As stated in the Comprehensive Plan, the Town should continue policies that advance the construction of facilities, such as sidewalks, to help fill in gaps in the pedestrian network.

### **Maud Robinson Trust**

In 2019, the Town of Vienna received \$8+ million from Maud Robinson (referred to as Maud Robinson Trust), a long time Vienna resident, for new sidewalks to be spent within five years. The funding is to only be used on streets with existing curb & gutter, no sidewalk on either side, and not listed in the CIP for future funding. The Town Council asked the Department of Public Works (DPW) to identify and propose candidate streets that met these criteria. DPW utilized the Town’s sidewalk rating system found in the Pedestrian Master Plan, which takes into account eight elements to determine prioritized streets:

- Safety
- Sidewalk classification
- Feasibility
- Suitability analysis (i.e., proximity to Town infrastructure and commerce)
- Road category
- Vehicle volume
- Proximity to metro stations
- Proximity to transit stops

After DPW determined initial streets for consideration, Town Council asked DPW to engage with and obtain feedback from residents who live on those streets. DPW held information sessions with those residents to determine their position on whether they would like a sidewalk on their street. Letters were distributed to the same neighbors to gain a more accurate count of those for or against sidewalks on their street. Initial reactions made clear that many neighbors were not aware the proposed sidewalks would be placed on Town-owned property (not private property). The overall responses have been mixed.

### **Considering Feedback from All Town Residents on Sidewalks**

At this stage, the Town Council has not instructed DPW to obtain feedback from the remaining 16,000+ Town residents who would benefit from the proposed sidewalks. Many users of these public sidewalks are not the residents of these streets - they are parents walking their kids to school, families walking to local businesses, residents walking their dogs, runners, kids biking to their friends’ houses across town, elderly with walkers, etc. Please note, the 2016 Town of Vienna survey results, which showed 87% of Vienna resident respondents thought adding sidewalks and trails to better connect the community were an important initiative to take over the next five years. In countless conversations with residents about the proposed sidewalk projects, the PAC has overwhelmingly heard that residents support and want sidewalks in town to connect our pedestrian network. While there is a small minority that do not support a sidewalk directly in front of their home, it would be a mistake to ignore the thousands of other residents who support a connected sidewalk network and will use these sidewalks to run, bike, stroll, walk, ride and build community.

### **Approve Sidewalks and Create a More Walkable Vienna**

Town Council's approved Comprehensive Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan explicitly state they will implement efforts to achieve Town goals of creating a more walkable Vienna and expanding the sidewalk network. It will be the legacy of this Council to achieve these goals with the generous Maud Robinson Trust. This is an opportunity for Town Council to vote in support of its policies that serve all Vienna residents. Supporting these sidewalk projects reaffirms Vienna's commitment to creating a pedestrian friendly community that prioritizes safety and access for all of our residents - and not just those who live on the proposed streets. It is important to continue to solicit feedback about any remaining concerns, as there are many ways DPW can work with residents to address issues, such as the desire to retain healthy large growth trees during sidewalk development. As the deadline for spending this generous gift approaches, it is time for Town Council to vote on the identified streets as a collective effort to expand the sidewalk network. Let us move forward with these public sidewalks on Town-owned property for the good of the community.

Respectfully,

Town of Vienna Transportation Safety Commission

Town of Vienna Pedestrian Advisory Committee