

The city completely rebuilt this sidewalk. So why did it leave this wire sticking out in such a ‘unusual and unexpected place’?

Toronto Hydro says it is working with the city to “better understand the current configuration” at this intersection.

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When the sidewalk on the south side of O'Connor Drive, east of St. Clair Avenue, was recently rebuilt and reconfigured, a guy wire attached to a utility pole was not relocated, leaving it in the path of pedestrians.

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The middle of a sidewalk is no place for a guy wire. So why wasn't it moved when a new sidewalk was put in?

That's a question for which there is no good answer, in the latest instalment of "What Were They Thinking?" an occasional series of deadly serious Fixer columns that casts a light on asinine ideas and dumb decisions.

The city talks a good game when it comes to sidewalks. Its website, toronto.ca, [declares that sidewalks](#) "support safety, accessibility, affordable transportation, physical activity, safe routes to school, aging in place and sustainable growth."

It also says safe, comfortable and accessible sidewalks are "a fundamental objective of the [Vision Zero 2.0 Road Safety Plan](#)," which aims to eliminate serious injury and fatalities on city streets.

But those lofty ideals seem to have been forgotten when an attractive new streetscape was recently built along the south side of O'Connor Drive, east of St. Clair Avenue.

Joe Egan emailed to say that he almost walked into a guy wire in the middle of the new sidewalk, which he described as "obviously in an unusual and unexpected place.

"It was part of the recent upgrade project on O'Connor, which dragged on and on. If this is legal, it certainly isn't safe. In reality, it is an accident waiting to happen."

Guy wires are tension cables that help stabilize utility poles. They are ubiquitous on city streets but are typically anchored near the curb or on a boulevard, where they aren't in the path of pedestrians.

A [Google Street View image from 2024](#), before the streetscape improvements, shows that the wire had been anchored near the front of an adjacent building, and not within the old sidewalk.

But the guy wire wasn't moved when the sidewalk was reconfigured, leaving it in the worst possible place, in terms of pedestrians. Most people would go around it without a thought. But for those with their nose glued to their phone — and that's a lot of people — it's an unintended target.

STATUS: I sent notes to the city and Toronto Hydro, asking if there's a plan to move it to a less obtrusive location. I got a reply from a Toronto Hydro spokesperson that suggested considerable pondering is required to resolve it.

“We completely understand the concern regarding the guy wire's current placement.

“It appears that during recent civic improvements by the City of Toronto, the area around the existing guy wire was redeveloped, including an expansion of the sidewalk.

“As a result, the guy wire now sits more prominently within the pedestrian pathway.”

Who knew? Thanks for explaining it.

“We are working with the city to better understand the current configuration and will work together to find a solution to this concern.”

