
DATE: September 1, 2016

TO: All Participants

FROM: Robert Lipka (RL), Principal Planner
Nodes and Corridors Team

SUBJECT: **Norwood Boulevard Corridor Study**
Community Feedback from our First Public Event on June 22, 2016

Greetings all,

As promised, the following report will provide you with a summarised version of the large amounts of data that were gathered from:

First Public Event -

- The event was held on June 22, 2016 at the Ital Canadian Seniors Association from 6:00pm to 8:30pm;
- Large volumes of data were collected from well over 100 plus people who were in attendance by the following means:
 - feedback forms that were circulated at the event;
 - comments that were written on notes affixed to a number of large scale maps of the study area; and
 - also many comments were left on large sheets of paper that were provided at the various tables set up at the event.

Online Survey -

- A link to an online survey was provided on the City's Norwood Boulevard Corridor Study project web page from June 22 to June 29 - at least 35 people responded; and
- The online survey was virtually an exact copy of the one that was circulated at the public event mentioned above.

The Feedback

To summarise the information effectively to the reader we have decided to follow the same order as listed on the feedback forms that were provided to all attendees. We have also included comments received via the many maps and large sheets of paper that were provided on the day of the event as well. And finally, we have also included all the feedback that was received via the online survey. To be clear, the questions provided to the public online were identical to the ones provided to the attendees of the public event.

Below you will find all of the questions that were listed on the survey (**bold text**) and under each of these questions you will find a set of summarised comments that were put together to encapsulate the responses. Admittedly some of the responses are repetitive. Instead of removing them we decided to keep them to illustrate just how strongly the community feels about some of the more pressing issues.

We will begin with the following:

Please share your ideas and input as we are starting to develop a vision for the future. I am (please check all that apply) - a resident of the following neighbourhoods:

The following table provides percentages for the following categories:

Location/identifier	Percentage (%) from event survey (total of 135 respondents)	Percentage (%) from on-line survey (total of 35 respondents)
Alberta Avenue	11	40
McCauley	7	14
Parkdale/Cromdale	2	26
Spruce Avenue	0	3
Central McDougall	0	0
Prince Rupert	0	3
Queen Mary	0	0
Downtown	0.7	0
An interested citizen who lives outside the neighbourhoods noted above	4	14

A property owner in the area	19	3
An owner/operator/employee of a business along Norwood Boulevard	4	0
A citizen who frequents Norwood Boulevard shops, businesses, community facilities/schools	10	0
A pedestrian who uses Norwood Boulevard	13	34
A cyclist who uses Norwood Boulevard	9	23
A transit commuter who uses Norwood Boulevard	4	20
A vehicle commuter who uses Norwood Boulevard	10.4	34
A representative of an association/organization (please specify)	1	6
Other (please specify)	2	0

General Ideas:

What do we need to know about how you use Norwood Boulevard?

Please consider the following questions in your answer:

Where do you go, how do you move, what do you use (shops, street furniture, amenities) and what do you do in the study area?

The comments generally referred to a vast number of well known shops, services and many other amenities in the area. Specifically a number of important destinations were mentioned including places like the Kingsway Mall, the Italian Centre and of course the many health clinics and other establishments in the area.

The comments also mentioned the Kingsway/Royal Alexandra and Stadium LRT stations as important destinations for travel and also mentioned places like Commonwealth Stadium, the adjacent Recreational Centre, Clarke Park and Kinnaird Ravine as other key neighbourhood amenities.

The comments also mentioned the fact that while some respondents moved around the study area by car, many more indicated that they used a variety of other transport modes to get around including walking, cycling and of course public transport.

What do you like? What are its strengths?

The comments generally focused on the fact that the area usually has good traffic flow (save and except the area near the new Kingsway/Royal Alexandra LRT Station - the disruption to traffic by the LRT was mentioned many times). Others expressed that the corridor has great connectivity to the downtown core and out to the suburbs as well and suggested that this be further enhanced.

Many respondents suggested that the area has a number of strengths because it is a mature neighbourhood with shops, services and some great buildings. Furthermore, they suggested that the area has great potential to provide even more shops, services and residential development as there are currently a number of vacant or barely used sites.

Others raised the point that the area has some great examples of historic architecture in the area that should be improved and enhanced where at all possible. They also indicated that the variety of building styles within the area, both new and old, is a definite positive when compared with many existing suburban neighbourhoods that are frankly monotonous.

In addition to the area's strengths from a built form perspective, others raised the point that the study area also enjoys some great green spaces including a number of local streets which offer some lovely street trees. In particular a number of respondents raised the importance of Norwood School, both for its architectural presence and heritage and the fact that the site provides a number of mature trees. They pointed out that the aesthetic beauty of this space helps to make the corridor a bit more pleasant as the rest of the corridor is generally made up of asphalt and concrete.

What do you dislike? What would you change about it?

Many respondents mentioned the fact that the study area has far too many derelict/neglected properties and buildings that could stand to either be removed and replaced or, at minimum, cleaned up.

They also suggested that the City needs to get tougher on the owners of these properties and, on a positive note, that the City should be providing incentives to these owners to make some changes to their properties which would assist in uplifting the whole neighbourhood. Some examples of these types of controls were potentially

looking at taxing surface parking lots and potentially providing reduced rates for the construction of parkades.

Many expressed frustration at how the City was maintaining the existing infrastructure in the entire study area - some of the specific mentions were:

- crumbling infrastructure;
 - poorly maintained sidewalks in the area;
 - the sewers in the area which seem to back up all the time and flood/puddle streets;
 - the many existing lead water pipes;
- poor traffic co-ordination;
- poor street lighting;
- poor intersection design; and
- many missing or poor pedestrian links to and through the neighbourhood.

Overall, many of comments focused on the fact that Norwood Boulevard currently favours vehicular traffic and that the balance needed to be changed to encourage improved facilities and other treatments to provide a safer and more convenient environment for pedestrians and cyclists (particularly for children and for persons with disabilities or simply for people who need a bit more time to cross the street).

Some of the suggestions received included the idea of investigating ways to improve the existing sidewalks in the area. Others suggested looking to rework many of the signalised intersections along the corridor in order to provide pedestrians and cyclists an improved streetscape. A number of respondents mentioned that they would like to see more street trees along the corridor itself and in the surrounding areas. Most seemed to agree that the key should be to provide more people space rather than just providing space for vehicles whether they are moving or not.

From the social side of it, there were many concerns about the current residents in the neighbourhood, particularly those currently out of work and living on social assistance, the number of renters in the area, others with physical and mental health issues, those who are unfortunately homeless and finally those involved in crime and prostitution.

The suggestions to work on these matters included ideas on how the City should investigate opportunities by providing a needle exchange/safe spaces in the neighbourhood for people to go to when they are in a tough spot. Another suggestion was to improve the zoning in the area to ensure it is friendly to social agencies. Others want to see the introduction of more public art in the area, particularly celebrating the indigenous history of the area.

Many commented on the fact that the area is really starting to attract young families and that more could be done to provide improved facilities/places/streets for children. One suggestion was to provide a small branch location of the Alberta Royal Museum just for children.

From a land use point of view much was made about the lack of basic shops and services in the neighbourhood and the fact that most were concerned about the many pawn shops, liquor stores, payday loan shops, massage parlours and the like. Instead, the respondents were looking for more housing (mainly market housing however a few respondents did think that more social housing would be fine so long as it's maintained to a high standard) plus a number of other respondents just wanted to see more basic uses in the area like a bank, a hardware store, a cafe or two, a grocery store, a post office and much more...

Land Use Ideas:

What do we need to know about land use in the area?

Please consider the following questions in your answer:

What uses do you think should change within the study area and why?

Overall the respondents were suggesting that they would like to see a slight increase in density along the corridor, specifically they would prefer to see less auto-oriented businesses and would much rather see the introduction of more mixed use buildings (including residential) that are more pedestrian-oriented than many of the current buildings along and adjacent to the corridor. Having said this they were very clear that they wanted to see the preservation of many of the older existing buildings along the corridor that possess some heritage value - they did not want to see large buildings being developed. Many mentioned that they did not want to see another situation like Oliver develop with 15+ storey buildings, most seem to think that the study area should be looking at buildings of a more manageable level of 5-6 stories as a maximum height. They were also keen to see the existing 'Pedestrian Commercial Shopping Street Overlay' expanded to both sides of the street (currently this overlay only applies to the southern side of the corridor).

Many respondents suggested that the City explore a number of eco-friendly ideas along this corridor including, but not limited to, preservation of existing buildings, solar power for street lighting, explore potential of daylighting portion(s) of Rat Creek (or at minimum seek to provide some signage/plaques to recognize the creek's former location), the inclusion of a Eco Station near Stadium LRT to encourage more recycling (clean up of

neighbourhood backyards), some community gardens and simply more trees along the corridor.

Some thought that the proposed study area for the corridor was too large and should be reduced in size, in their minds they thought it should overlap with the Italian Centre BRZ and the Chinatown BRZ.

Others suggested that the zoning for the area was a huge barrier to any redevelopment - too restrictive. They suggested that it be reworked to provide more flexibility while at the same time reinforce good design that encourages and supports positive redevelopment of the area.

Parking was a concern - particularly during major events at Commonwealth Stadium. Many respondents thought that the City should be investigating the idea of building more parkades to both provide additional parking and to take the cars off the streets to make the area more pedestrian friendly. A number of respondents mentioned that the parking rules within the zoning by-law needed to be relaxed to allow for developments to go ahead without having to provide vast amounts of parking spaces (eg. the recent issue with the Aviary music venue/bar). Some suggested that we drop parking minimums in the zoning by-law and instead go for parking maximums.

And finally, many voices were calling for the reduction of vehicular traffic along this corridor. Some of the ideas included:

- investigating the idea of limiting larger vehicles through the corridor;
- a reduction in posted speeds from 50 km/hr to either 30 or 40 km/h; and
- provide a more multi-modal transportation system along the corridor which should include all modes (walking, cycling and public transport as well as motor vehicles).

What type of land use change, if any, do you see in these areas (commercial/residential/mixed use)?

Most respondents appear to be keen at investigating opportunities of increasing the density along this corridor - in particular they would like to see more commercial activity at ground level with residences above. More specifically, some residents pointed out that part of the focus of delivering good residential options should include units for families - not just 1 and 2 bedroom apartments. Having said this, some questioned the City's taxation model for mixed use buildings and therefore recommended that this model be reviewed to make it more attractive for developers.

What and where are the uses which should be maintained and improved within and around the study area and why?

As with previous comments, many respondents mentioned the section between 92 and 95 Streets along the corridor and suggested that the many historic buildings/storefronts along this stretch and the rest of the corridor should be maintained/enhanced. Having said this, many also pointed out that there are a lot of buildings along the corridor that are less than desirable and that there are far too many derelict or poorly maintained buildings along the corridor which really need to be addressed.

The respondents mentioned a number of linkages that either could be improved or created to enhance the overall experience of moving along and through the subject corridor. Also there were some general comments on how to improve the overall experience along the corridor, eg. consider plantings (trees/landscaping) along the full corridor. Seek to improve existing/possible connections to Stadium Station, Northlands, the river valley (including Kinnaird Ravine), Little Italy and many more. One respondent specifically mentioned the area west of 82nd Street along 112 Avenue and suggested that the City investigate the idea of introducing more commercial uses here to capitalize on its proximity to the Stadium and the LRT station immediately south of these lands.

Transportation Ideas:

What do we need to know about transportation along Norwood Boulevard?

Please consider the following questions in your answer

What are the current transportation issues in and around the study area (including walking, people on bikes and transit and in vehicles, goods movement)?

Many of the comments from respondents on this matter related to the overall streetscape through the corridor and surrounding streets. Many complained about the following:

- poor quality of the sidewalks - both in width and maintenance issues;
- the lack of trees (particularly along 111 and 112 Avenues);
- the lack of seating throughout;
- poorly designed/unsafe pedestrian crossings - some mentioned that a number of them have major sightline issues;
- lack of bike infrastructure (bike lanes, racks, etc.);
- poor lighting along the bulk of the corridor;

- simply far too much vehicular traffic which makes the corridor a horrible place for all other mode choices other than motor vehicles;
- vehicle speeds along the corridor are far too fast and should be tamed; and
- the delivery of public transport (particularly buses) along this corridor needs work (specific mention was made about the poor frequency of buses along this corridor and that the existing bus stops need to be upgraded).

Some solutions to this...:

- some have suggested providing pedestrian tunnels underneath the corridor, particularly at the busier intersections;
- while others suggested seeking to repurpose the space on the street for other modes of transport - less of a focus for private vehicles - a few even suggested to bring back the trolley or add some LRT into the middle of Norwood Boulevard;
- another few suggestions identified the need to potentially look at reducing speeds along the corridor - particularly in the vicinity of Norwood Public School - perhaps a 30km/hr school zone; and
- there were also a number of suggestions to provide more cycling amenity to encourage more cycling in the area for example:
 - cycle lanes (preferably protected);
 - cycle signals;
 - cycle stop boxes at intersections; and
 - of course some cycle racks along and near the corridor.

Further mention was made about the lack of good facilities in and around the corridor for people with disabilities - for the elderly, people in wheelchairs and for those who use walkers and other walking aids. They wanted to see the City take a stronger role in making the corridor more accessible for all users - universal design and accessibility was mentioned a number of times.

Others mentioned concerns about social problems in and around the corridor and how street people, drug use and prostitution negatively impacted their experience of the corridor.

What transportation improvements could be made in and around this study area to make it safer and/or more convenient?

A number of suggestions were made to improve the corridor - some relatively simple and cost-effective - while others may take a bit more time and money. The suggestions to make it a safer and more pleasant place to be - particularly for those who like to walk and cycle were the following:

For walkers - the suggestions included:

- repaint all on-street markings as many have faded away which makes their areas dangerous;
- improve street lighting;
- provide better/wider sidewalks (in particular, sidewalks too close to traffic along 111 Avenue from 95 to 92 Street and along 111 Avenue from The Kingsway to 101 Street);
- install a 30km/hr speed zone;
- light and signalize all pedestrians crossings along the corridor;
- seek to provide more pedestrians crossings where possible (one example listed was outside Commonwealth Stadium across 112 Avenue - currently there is only one informal crossing);
- upgrade all existing signalized intersections to provide larger waiting areas at corners (a few examples raised were the north-west corner of 111 Avenue and 95 Street and the southwest corner of 111 Avenue and 97 Street);
- provide a frequent/direct bus running from Kingsway/Royal Alexandra LRT station to Stadium LRT station;
- do a better job at dealing with road closures, etc. (currently a number of temporary signs are placed poorly along the corridor - definite Universal Design matter as many of them are left on sidewalks blocking pedestrian movement when not in use);
- provide bulb-outs at the intersections of the corridor with all local streets; and
- remove all beg buttons at signalized intersections to further highlight the fact that pedestrians are at the top of the transport hierarchy.

For cyclists - the suggestions included:

- more bike racks;
- storage lockers;
- seating areas;
- more and safer facilities - in particular would like to see separated cycle lanes along 110 or 112 Avenues; and

- want to see more cycling infrastructure at signalised intersections eg. cycle signals, call buttons, stop boxes and the like.

A number of other respondents brought up the concerns of parking in the area, both for residents and for visitors - particularly during events at the Stadium. Some suggested adding more parkades, particularly within the Stadium site, but also some recommended that the City consider adding more parking spaces along local streets adjacent to 111 Avenue - similar to what was done for 118 Avenue - pockets of parking close to the arterial.

A number of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians mentioned a few major blind spots along the corridor that they think the City needed to investigate as soon as possible. The intersections include:

- 111 Avenue and 96 Street (north side);
- 111 Avenue and 90 Street (south side); and
- 111 Avenue and 97 Street where a respondent claimed that her husband was hit by a garbage truck as he was crossing the street as a pedestrian.

Others continued to raise concerns about the LRT and its' impact on traffic flows, in particular one concern was raised about access to the Royal Alexandra Hospital for emergency vehicles when the traffic gates are down at the LRT crossings.

And finally, one respondent suggested that we need to rethink the entire corridor of 111/112 Avenue from Mayfield Road to 50 Street and provide the following street cross section instead of the current street layout. Their design included the following: two vehicular lanes in each direction, some left turn lanes where necessary, separated cycle lanes and wide sidewalks (2.0m+) that are provided away from moving vehicles for extra comfort and security and of course rows of trees on both sides of the street to provide amenity for pedestrians.

What would it take to make this corridor a more attractive and safer place to walk?

The bulk of the suggested ideas to make this corridor a more attractive and safe place to walk included the following:

- encouraging more smaller businesses (restaurants, coffee shops, community related businesses) to set up;
- improved lighting;

- better/wider sidewalks;
- more/safer pedestrian crossings;
- some street trees;
- green spaces;
- reduce/tame vehicular traffic;
- pave more of the rear lanes;
- restore/celebrate Rat Creek;
- improved transit along 111/112 Avenues;
- 30 or 40 km/h speed zone - particularly near Norwood School; and
- more police activity (particularly on-foot patrols) in the area would be welcomed.

Design Ideas:

Urban design addresses streets and public spaces, whole neighborhoods and districts, and entire cities, with the goal of making urban areas functional (accessible to all people), attractive, and sustainable.

What do we need to know about the urban design of the study area?

Please consider the following questions in your answer:

What new uses and amenities could make this study area a more interesting and attractive place to live, work, play, visit and learn in?

We received some very interesting ideas on how to make this area more interesting and attractive. Some of the more specific ideas included, the creation of a plaza at the intersection of the 111 Ave and 95 Street - perhaps look at providing some benches, plantings and perhaps even a fountain.

Another suggestion included having a 'Jane's Walk' in the neighbourhood - this a walk which celebrates the life of Jane Jacobs - a famous town planner. Jane's Walks are an annual celebration of people and cities held around the world on the first weekend of May.

As for uses, we received a few comments on creating a 'medical clinic corridor' in the area which would include facilities to compliment the Royal Alexandra Hospital and the Buchanan Centre including some smaller medical clinics, homeopathic/herbal shops and the like.

Another suggestion was to have more functional art work provided along the corridor instead of the usual stand alone items. For example, having murals for crosswalks, parklets with chin-up bars, stationary bicycles that could operate a lighted/moving piece of artwork and more artwork that celebrates First Nations people was mentioned a number of times.

Other more general suggestions included some that have already been mentioned in previous questions plus a few new comments as well:

- improved drainage in the area;
- more mixed use development (including but not limited to):
 - family oriented housing;
 - restaurants;
 - pubs with patios;
 - clothing stores;
 - post office;
 - book store;
 - butcher;
 - sporting goods store;
 - child care centre;
 - art supply store;
 - and craft stores;
- improved street furniture and improved design (including but not limited to):
 - more benches;
 - lighting;
 - street trees/plantings/landscaping;
 - bike racks and bike storage/lockers;
 - parking for vehicles that does not dominate the street frontage (provided in rear/underneath or above);
 - improved street signs (perhaps heritage ones?);
 - flowers baskets hanging from light poles; and
 - more cameras in the area for security.

And finally, we also received a list of things that respondents did not want to see any more of in the neighbourhood:

- derelict shops;
- body rubs;
- liquor stores; and
- surface parking.

What kinds of public spaces and/or gathering places could enhance the livability and attractiveness of the study area?

We received some very interesting ideas on what kinds of public spaces and/or gathering places that would be of interest to the community. A few comments related to a request about creating a themed festival for the area - perhaps focusing on history; we could call it 'Gateway to History'. This event could link to Borden Park, Highlands and to the corridor itself which already includes a number of historical gems.

Another innovative idea mentioned was that the City should investigate ideas of integrating public and private space in front of homes. Using this space more wisely by working with adjacent property owners the City could seek to improve the landscaping, add more trees and maybe even seating in these areas where public space is limited.

There was also a comment about the existing Sprucewood Library at 95 Street and 116 Avenue which suggested possibly looking at repositioning it - would assume that the respondent is seeking a library closer to the subject corridor. The same respondent also suggested looking at potentially creating another art centre in the study area to balance the existing Nina Haggerty on 118 Avenue.

Other more general suggestions included providing the following:

- new small parks (could include skateboard parks or basket courts);
- wider sidewalks;
- more street trees;
- benches;
- awnings along the street for weather protection;
- solar charging benches;
- roof-top cafes;
- art murals (particularly from an indigenous lens); and
- a number of requests for an off-leash dog park.

Anything else?

Is there anything else we should know about the study area that might help us in these first stages of the process?

Some respondents commented that one of the major keys to the success of this endeavour was to ensure that links are made between the Stadium Station ARP, the

Stadium Station TOD, Northlands 2020, the Kinnaird Ravine/River Valley plan and the plans for ReImagine Jasper Avenue.

A few respondents mentioned that the City needs to create an Advisory Committee for this study to ensure that the plan actually gets implemented over time. Others stated that the City needs to potentially consider a door to door/face to face survey of homes and residents and to make sure we involve all of the local Community Leagues.

Others suggested that the City need to investigate projects similar to the 'Curb Appeal Grants' offered a few years ago where residents received grants up to 50% of their proposed improvements on their properties. However instead of just making it available to property owners we should look at ideas of providing something similar to businesses and to rental properties as well.

As for cleaning up the neighbourhood, we received a suggestion for future 'Big Bin' events. The idea was that the City should look to give priority to local residents in the area on the day of the collections to encourage more users - apparently in the past many residents had to resort to waiting in long line ups which was seen as a deterrent to some.

Another respondent noted that there appear to be a number of consecutive lots for sale along the corridor and suggested that the City consider buying them up. They also suggested that the City could even consider closing some of the lanes which run parallel to the corridor to provide even more developable land adjacent to these lots.

More consultation was suggested, particularly with a number of the existing cultural organizations and other groups in the area including (but not limited to the following):

- Aboriginal community;
- Italian community;
- Chinese community;
- the many churches and mosques in the area;
- the Somali Centre;
- the Odd Fellows;
- Bike Works North;
- the Friendship Centre and many more.

Most respondents were clear that the groups mentioned above already have significant investment in the area and that they truly want to see this part of town flourish.

As part of this improved consultation, we did also receive a suggestion that the City endeavour to have ongoing meaningful community meetings about streetscape maintenance. These discussions would ensure that all concerns are recorded and responded to in an appropriate manner. Others even suggested that perhaps the City seek to decentralize maintenance to the local community.

We also received a number of random ideas - some of the comments included:

- a new plaza at the intersection of 111 Avenue and 95 Street;
- seek to eliminate all abandoned buildings;
- create more multi-use buildings with big balconies;
- build more basketball courts and skate parks; and
- to consider renaming Norwood Boulevard to Rat Creek Boulevard to better recognize the fact that the street was built on top of this historical creek.

And finally, as mentioned earlier, a number of respondents commented that they wanted to see an increase in the level of police presence in the area - particularly more officers on the foot and/or bikes patrolling the corridor and surrounds.

Please help us prepare for future meetings by answering the following - how did you hear about this meeting?

Method	Number of people	Details
Word of mouth	9	
Newspaper advertisement	3	
Media coverage	0	
Website - City of Edmonton or other (please specify)	3	
Social media	7	
Road signs	1	
Flyer in mailbox	16	
Email	1	

Other (please specify)	4	Included - 1 advised by friend, 1 via Twitter, 2 Addressed letter to property owner.
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Conclusion

Our first Public Event for the Norwood Boulevard Corridor Study was a huge success. However, it is only the start of a process that will see a number of interactions and discussions that will be critical in putting together a strong and coherent vision to help move this corridor forward.

It was a great beginning, our team learned a lot from the many citizens who participated in the discussions. Overall the strong response shows that the local residents and the visitors to this area truly care about what happens there and are really excited to see some progress. They also made it abundantly clear that they want to work with the City to create some inspirational ideas to create an even stronger community.

To sum up this report I will use a quote from one of the respondents to the online survey. The respondent mentioned that they had chosen many years ago to live and work in the study area and are extremely proud of their community and its progress to date. They stated that 'There IS a place for everyone, (here in the study area).' and then challenged us all to '*Be brave, be bold, be world class. I dare you!*'