

McKernan/Belgravia
Station Area Plan
Workshop 1 Summary Report

Prepared for



By



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1.0 APPROACH

Public Workshop 1 was held on November 22, 2011 in the main gym at McKernan School. The Public Workshop was the first meeting held with the public in the preparation of the McKernan/Belgravia Station Area Plan. The purpose of this workshop was to introduce the community to the Consultant Team who would be assisting the City in the preparation of the station area plan; introduce the concept of Transit Oriented Development (TOD); and review the preliminary analysis of the station area with the community. A total of (114) people attended the Workshop.

Upon arrival, workshop participants were encouraged to review the presentation boards which outlined the planning process and initial site analysis for the station area. City staff and members from the Consultant Team were on hand to answer questions during this period. At 7:00 p.m. the team made a presentation to the attendees. This presentation introduced the planning team, project goals and planning process as well as highlighted the existing conditions within the area and suggested ideas for future changes. A copy of the powerpoint presentation is provided in Appendix 1.

After the presentation participants were asked to break into groups of 8-10 to go over the questions outlined in the workshop workbook. These groups were unfacilitated, with project team members available for questions. The participants discussed the questions within their groups and recorded their answers in the workbooks. The workbook questions were then reviewed with all the participants and individual groups presented their answers to the larger group.

The project team collected the workbooks at the end of the workshop. The answers to the workshop questions were then compiled into verbatim “roll-ups” and key points are summarized in this report.

2.0 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Thirty-seven (37) workbooks were complete and submitted from the workshop. The workbook questions can be found below with a summary of the responses to each of the questions. A verbatim summary is available in Appendix 3.

Station Area Existing Conditions

1. *Where do you go in the station area? What do you use and what do you do?*

Participants indicated the following uses and activities that they undertook within the station area:

- Use the LRT station (16)
- Coffee shop (10)
- Walk, bike and/or use the trails (9)
- Bookstore (7)

- Pharmacy (7)
- Park space and playgrounds (5)
- Hair salon/barber shop (5)
- Convenience store (4)
- Daycare (2)

One participant noted that they used the bank that was formerly located in this area.

2. What do you do like within and around the station area and what are the area's key strengths?

Key strengths included:

- Bicycle connections (8)
- Accessibility of the neighbourhood to various amenities and other areas of the City including the University and downtown (8)
- Pedestrian friendly aspect of the community (7)
- Accessibility to neighbourhood schools (6)
- The family-friendly character (5)
- The parks and trees (4)
- Pedestrian underpass (4)
- Shelters and garbage containers at station (1)

3. What do you dislike within and around the station area and what are the key issues that need to be addressed?

Key issues included:

- Traffic congestion and reduced access to and from the neighbourhood due to the LRT (16)
- Need for additional commercial businesses in the area (10). Suggestions for businesses included a grocery store, restaurant, and bars.
- Disconnected pathways through the neighbourhood, including the pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths and the multi-use trail (8). Several respondents specifically mentioned difficulty crossing the major thoroughfares of 114 Street and University Avenue.
- Winter accessibility of the neighbourhood (5). One respondent noted that the underpass stairs and ramp were difficult for elderly people to use in winter because they were slippery and hard to clear of snow.
- Parking around the LRT station (5)

- Lack of day care in area (1)
- Litter from station (1)
- Recent unattractive duplexes built in neighbourhood (1)
- Too much student housing (1)
- Growing pressure for increased density in the area (1)
- Pedestrian walkways, especially multiuse trail, not well lit (1)

4. *What adjectives would you use to describe the characteristics of the station area today?*

For this question, responses varied greatly. For some of the responses it is unclear whether the respondent was describing the McKernan and Belgravia neighbourhoods (the “station area”) or the actual area of the station. Below lists the general themes of the responses in order of most frequent to least:

- Bland/boring
- Functional/efficient
- Pleasant/safe
- Transitional/aging
- Fragmented/isolated
- Congestion
- Bleak
- Cold
- Quiet
- Noisy
- Visible

5. *What else might be going on in the area that the Project Team should know about? Are we missing anything?*

Workshop participants noted a number of items for the Project Team to consider during the development of the station area plan:

- Infrastructure, including sidewalks and roads is in poor condition and requiring improvements and/or upgrades (6)
- Retail businesses in the community were suffering due to dilapidation of commercial buildings maintenance and short business hours (4)
- Issue of landowners postponing maintenance on home/allowing homes to become dilapidated in anticipation of future development opportunities (2)

- Concerns about the potential closure of the neighbourhood schools (2)
- Student housing in neighbourhood/duplexes being used as rooming houses for students (2)
- Loud LRT crossing signals (1)
- Need for bicycle parking at LRT station (1)
- Need for accessible adult/seniors housing (without stairs) (1)
- Do not like the bike lane on 76 Ave (1)
- Need for flexibility on height restrictions (1)
- Multiuse trail uncomfortable, especially at night (1)

Two (2) respondents suggested that the Consultant Team review materials from previous community consultation activities during the planning and development of the LRT line.

Area of Change and Stability

1. What areas/uses do you think may change or should change within and around the station area? And why?

Sixteen (16) respondents noted that they would support some level of **increased density and/or mix of housing types and uses**, although (2) respondents felt that density may exacerbate parking and traffic issues. Additionally, nine (9) respondents indicated that **additional commercial uses** should be developed within the station area. The majority of respondents felt that increased density was appropriate along 114 Street, 76 Ave, University Ave and around LRT station, where as commercial development was appropriated primarily along 76 Ave and around the LRT station.

The following suggestions were made regarding types of housing that should be included in the neighbourhood:

- Need for family oriented housing, including low income family housing (4)
- Need for seniors housing (3)
- Need for additional student housing in the neighbourhood (2)
- Area should remain low density (2)
- Town housing or stacked town housing on 114 Street (1)
- Live/work units (1)

Other suggestions for changes included:

- Improve the crossing at University Ave/the multi-use trail should not abruptly end at University Ave (4)
- Redevelopment of the St. Peter's Catholic School site (2)

- Create incentives for redevelopment (2)
- Improve the sound “wall” by replacing with landscaping or green space (1)
- Provide covered bicycle racks at the LRT station (1)
- Replace old, dilapidated apartments (1)
- Restrict parking (1)
- Angle speakers for LRT so less noise in neighbourhood (1)

2. What are the areas/uses which should be preserved and enhanced within and around the station area?

Participants noted the following items that should be preserved and enhanced in the new station area plan:

- Existing park spaces/trees (13)
- The residential, family-oriented character of the neighbourhood (10)
- Neighbourhood schools (10)
- Existing single family dwellings (5)
- The multi-use trail (3)
- Commercial area (1)
- The bookstore (1)
- The cafe (1)
- The Community Leagues (1)
- Basement suites (1)
- Cleanliness and openness of station (1)

Participants made additional suggestions and comments regarding potential changes to their neighbourhoods:

- Changes should only be encouraged in areas within close proximity to the LRT station (2)
- Traffic congestion is an issues and should be managed (1)
- Schools and the skating rinks could be preserved by encouraging tasteful higher density (1)

One respondent made the following comment in regards to the preservation of a historical building located within the station area: *“CD Howe post-war housing nearby should be preserved. How I don’t know but it would be a grand thing. Full of history of a society.”*

3. Are there sites that are under pressure to redevelop or relocate that we should address?

Areas identified as being under pressure to redevelop included:

- 76 Avenue (6)
- University Avenue (3)
- 114 Street (2)

Several participants (2) noted that new development was already occurring along 76 Avenue. These participants expressed concern that this new development may inhibit the assembly of larger parcels of land to develop higher density projects along this street.

In addition, (4) respondents noted that there was significant pressure to develop student housing in the area. (3) respondents noted concern over high density and the height of future developments in the area and the desire to preserve the low-density character of the neighbourhood. One respondent noted that the St. Peter's Catholic School training site was under pressure to redevelop, but should be retained. Another respondent noted the fire department should be relocated.

Several (4) responses noted the lack of commercial, with one response suggesting redevelopment and increased density could help to support commercial, one response noted that the poor condition of existing commercial building and the need to redevelop those sites, and the last suggested the development of small retail kiosks on the LRT platform.

One respondent made the following comment regarding future development in the station area:

"Design guidelines / standards would be useful to ensure that new houses fit the character of the neighbourhood (e.g. no huge houses intended for rental to as many students as possible) and are built to the highest energy-efficiency standards."

Creating Livable Communities

1. What new uses and amenities could make this station area a more interesting and attractive place to live, work and visit?

The following suggestions were put forward by workshop participants:

- Over half of the respondents suggested increased commercial developments (21)
 - Suggestions for retail and professional uses included:
 - coffee shop / bistro / restaurant;
 - kiosk / newspaper stand / magazine store;
 - grocery store / organic food co-op / bakery;
 - boutiques / shops;
 - wine bar / pub; offices / medical clinics;
 - hardware store;
 - a convenience store.

- Two respondents felt it was economically unfeasible for the neighbourhood to support commercial development (2)
- Additional park space and/or improved landscaping (4)
- Improved crossings across 114 Street (2)
- Improve pedestrian walkway along 114 Street (1)
- Community bulletin board (1)
- Improved/expanded heated waiting area for the LRT (1)
- More bike racks at LRT station (1)
- Decorate/beautify LRT station platform (1)
- Rebranding the area as a “green” community by requiring “green” building technologies for all new development. (1)

2. What kinds of public spaces, gathering places and parks could enhance the livability and attractiveness of the station area?

- Existing park space and green space should be retained. (7)
 - Respondents noted that these space were well used and provided sufficient public space for the community.
- Commercial space (kiosk, cafe, retail shops, restaurant/bistro) could be used as a gathering area in the community (4)
- Add community gardens (1)
- One respondent requested that access to Keller Road and the adjacent park be limited to reduce the unwanted activity that was occurring there. (1)

3. What improvements could be made for pedestrian, cyclists and transit uses in and around the station and station area?

The following suggestions for improvements were made by workshop participants:

- Connectivity between trails, bike paths and walkways within the station area - many of these paths ending abruptly (8)
 - Difficulty crossing University and 114 Street was noted as a major barrier to connectivity
- Improved bicycle parking at the station (3)
- Improved bus transfers (2)
- Lighting (2)
- Safety (1)
- Visibility on bike paths (1)
- Shelters/heated shelters (1)

- Better access to the river valley amenities (1)
- Put LRT underground (1)
- Improve decrepit infrastructure (sidewalks and roads) (1)

4. *What would you like your station to become in 20 years? What are your aspirations for the future of the station area?*

Many of the respondents still see this area as remaining predominately low-density residential with an increase in housing types and some medium density housing located along the major roads (114 Street and 76 Avenue). Several participants noted that they would like the area to be inclusive, with a mix of ages and income levels. A small mixed use and/or commercial node was envisioned by a few of the participants.

Two respondents noted that they would like to see either the LRT or the road put underground to reduce the conflict between the LRT and vehicles. One respondent noted that they would like to see public art in the station area.

Let Us Know What You Think!

In the final comments, many respondents expressed concern regarding the impact of higher density development in the predominantly low density neighbourhood and the erosion of single family housing within this neighbourhood. The main concerns included the impact of new development on the existing low density residences in the neighbourhood, potential parking issues and increased traffic problems that would result from any additional density. In addition, many respondents were apprehensive about the quality and aesthetics of new development and would like to see some restrictions or design guidelines to ensure any new development is of a high standard.

There appeared to be substantial support from the community for family and seniors housing development within the community. While there is some support for student housing, many of the respondents indicated that they would like to see this area remain a family neighbourhood. Vehicular traffic and parking is currently a major concern and many envision these issues worsening with increased density in the neighbourhood.

While there are concerns, many of the respondents were supportive of the idea of an incremental density increase and redevelopment within the neighbourhood. They see this area as a great place to live and most respondents indicated that infill development, done appropriately, could benefit the neighbourhood.

3.0 WORKSHOP EVALUATION

At the workshop, attendees were provided a Workshop Evaluation Form and asked to provide feedback on the workshop structure and effectiveness. Forty-six (46) workshop evaluations were returned. Of the responses received:

- 79% of respondents either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the information presented was useful and informative.
- 88% of respondents somewhat agreed or strongly agreed the information was easy to understand
- 88% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed the project representatives were friendly, helpful and accessible
- 74% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the project representatives provided satisfactory answers to questions
- 77% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed they had a better understanding of the project because of their attendance
- 70% of respondents were somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the City's efforts to keep the public informed about the Station Area Plan
- 66% were somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunity to ask questions and seek additional information, where 20% were somewhat unsatisfied or not satisfied
- 73% were somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunity to provide feedback and comments

4.0 SUMMATION / NEXT STEPS

Below is a summary of the McKernan/Belgravia Station Area Plan project schedule and opportunities for public consultation.



This summary report is a summary of Public Workshop #1 and represents the completion of Phase I of this project.

The project team is now entering Phase II in which we will be developing several design alternatives that will then be tested with stakeholders, internal City stakeholder and the public at the Public Workshop 2. This workshop is scheduled for late February or early March.

Once a design alternative is chose, the draft Station Area Plan will be developed and presented to the public for review and comment. The final plan will then be presented to Council for approval.