

**MINUTES OF
CITY OF EDINA, MINNESOTA
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PUBLIC WORKS AND PARK MAINTENANCE FACILITY
FRANCE AVENUE URBAN DESIGN WORKSHOP
APRIL 22, 2013
7:00 P.M.**

Present:

City Council: Mayor Hovland, CM Bennett, CM Sprague

ETC: Chair Paul Nelson, Dawn Spanhake, Ann Braden, Jennifer Janovy

EEC: Julie Resser

Edina Public Art Commttee: Chair Barbara LaValleur

Community (residents/businesses):

Ellen Morton, Centennial Lakes Office Park

T. J. Death, 7101 France Ave. So.

Lori Syverson, 3300 Edinborough Way

Robb Gruman, Fairview Hospital, 6401 France Ave. So.

Bob Gubrud, 4421 Ellsorth Dr.

Rachelle Eisenbraun, WFM, 7401 France Ave. So.

Consultant:

WSB: Chuck Rickart, Andy Plowman

LHB: Michael Schroeder

Staff: Wayne Houle, Bill Neuendorf, Sharon Allison

Wayne Houle (City Engineer) introduced the project and described the general process for considering further urban design for France Avenue. The currently planned pedestrian improvements for the corridor were outlined.

Michael Schroeder (consultant) noted the purpose of the urban design workshop process was an outgrowth of the France Avenue pedestrian improvements project, that the intention was to work with stakeholders to define issues and directions, and then articulate a series of statements that would guide further evolution of France Avenue. He suggested this process would not result in a definitive plan, but rather would establish a series of guiding principles. He further noted that this process would not resolve or address every issue; it would focus on areas of agreement so that progress might continue. Areas of disagreement (always possible on public improvement projects) would be address in the context of agreed upon directions for change (that is, the guiding principles will provide focus that allows areas of disagreement to be resolved).

Michael Schroeder reviewed a brief PowerPoint highlighting a definition of urban design, noting in particular that urban design is not simply things added to the public realm.

Chuck Rickart (consultant) reviewed the planned pedestrian improvements for France Avenue.

Michael Schroeder briefly described the context for urban design. A series of mapped contexts were displayed, although focus was not directed to them. The maps indicated a breakdown of conditions present along the France Avenue corridor that might suggest appropriate directions for urban design thoughts.

Michael Schroeder introduced a workshop session directed to gaining input from those present through responses to four broad areas of inquiry. A meeting participant asked if this would be an appropriate time to share some of her thoughts about the corridor, noting that France Avenue should be a full use street, that this is a huge regional destination, that people don't think of walking of France Avenue, that the environment is critical, that the corridor should have flair (art bus stops, murals, sidewalk poetry), and that this is someone's neighborhood.

a. Participants were asked to describe the character, qualities, or experience of France Avenue today, using single words. Responses included:

- Dangerous
- Bland
- Functional
- Busy
- Wide
- Fast
- Concrete
- Boring
- Potential
- Parking Lots
- Linear
- Congested
- Wall
- Avoidance
- Uninviting
- Vast

b. Participants were asked to describe the character, qualities, or experience of France Avenue as they would like it to be in the future, using single words. Responses included:

- Safe
- Welcoming
- Artistic
- Friendly
- Character
- Walkable
- Memorable
- Sustainable
- Greener
- Connected
- Coordinated
- Accessible
- Human-scale
- Multi-Modal
- Accommodating
- Premier
- Fabulous France
- Destination
- Bike-able
- Identifiable
- Permeable

c. Participants were asked to think about the corridor from the perspective of a neighbor (a stationary observer like a resident, an employee) and a traveler (a dynamic observer like a motorist, a transit user, a restaurant patron or movie goer, a shopper) to identify the most significant issues for the corridor. Responses included:

- Not attractive, a "concrete river," it reverberates
- Daunting
- Feels unsafe, even if it's only the perception
- Hard to cross, hard to move along it for pedestrians
- Maintenance loses to winter
- No buffer, no separation
- Street crossings are not safe
- Interfering signage
- Moving from place to place is tiring
- Can only walk on one side of the street (76th Street to north)
- People don't visit the Promenade
- This is the corridor of innovation
- Navigating France is difficult, especially for first time visitor
- Doesn't accommodate transit users
- Potential is in tact
- Northern end is unsafe
- Could use some wayfinding
- No welcoming signage

d. Participants were asked to highlight those "things" that make people remember or think about France

Avenue—those things that lend a sense of identity to the corridor. Responses included:

- What happens on either side of France Avenue – school, pool, then movies, shopping, dining – it's conducive to movement
- Places to go, people need to be seen
- Great assets along the entire street; need to safely connect some of the dots; it needs to be bike and pedestrian-friendly
- Not much is vacant or for lease – people come here
- Not quite frenetic, but just right (better than San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles); it's the best of both worlds; busy but not too busy; shopping but not overload
- Gateways, skyways, world-class health facilities, amazing retail, world-class office, parks, and parking
- Multi-use
- Nature fascination
- Solution to 'A'-Minor Arterial – this should become the model

e. Participants were asked to share their ideas about the France Avenue that they would like to see in the future, considering ideas for both the public and private realms. Responses included:

- A walking tour of innovation
- Able to walk at a steady pace along the corridor
- Facilitate other modes, park at Southdale, cross streets to pleasantly get to Centennial Lakes
- Get rid of parking lots to get people to walk
- Connectivity – make it work for people who want to spend five hours here
- Local circulator – use as a pilot
- All season accessibility
- Health, innovation, the threshold at the skyway
- Lighting at the right scale – special and big
- Don't let it be just a through corridor
- Make use of the wasted space (like the medians on York and some on France)
- France Avenue is the connector – from 50th and France to Southdale

f. Participants asked about other streets of similar scale with good urban design solutions. Discussion of similar streets suggested Cretin Avenue, Fairview Avenue, Lyndale Avenue, and Glumack Drive.

The consultant team will assemble the responses and begin formulating a series of draft statements and concepts that might form the basis for an urban design direction. That will be the focus of a meeting with the ETC, likely in a similar format to this workshop.