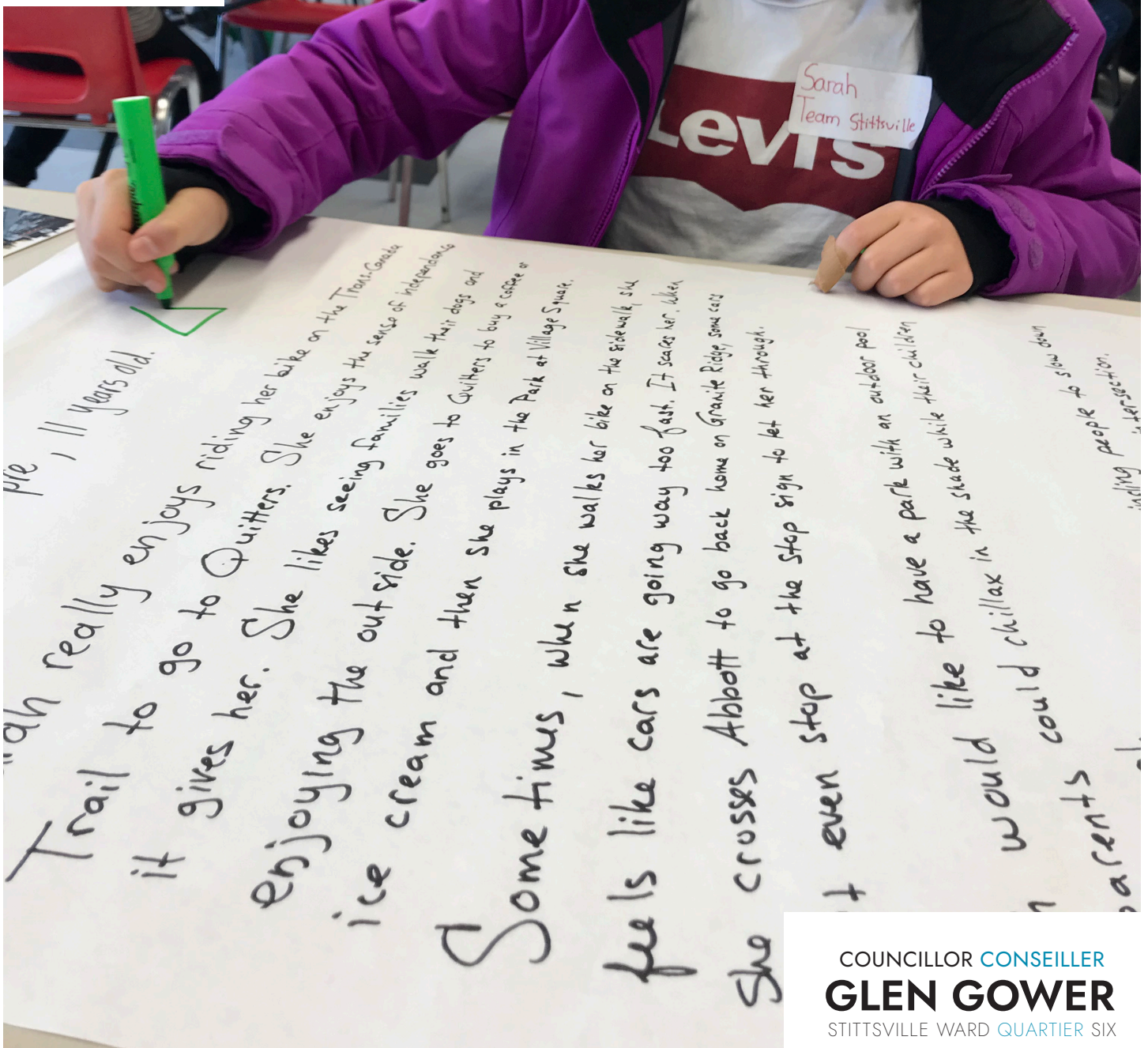


Revitalizing Stittsville Main Street

What we heard from the community

October 2020



COUNCILLOR CONSEILLER
GLEN GOWER
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Overview

In January we published a discussion paper outlining current challenges and ideas for the revitalization of Stittsville Main Street. Our goal was to engage the community in further discussion, generate ideas, and identify stakeholders and volunteers to participate in future planning and advocacy.

We organized the paper under five core focus areas including:

- Economic development
- Transportation and mobility
- Beautification
- Activities
- Municipal planning

From January to April, we gathered feedback from the community in a number of ways, including:

- An online survey
- In-person workshops
- Community pop-ups
- Meetings with community groups
- Meetings with local businesses
- Meetings with City staff

We used all of that feedback to put this document together, with three sections:

1. Short-Term Recommendations

Actions that we can start now to support future revitalization efforts.

2. Survey results

A summary of the 183 survey responses. We've also highlighted key comments and themes collected through the survey.

3. General feedback

A compilation of comments and feedback from the in-person workshops, emails, stakeholder meetings, and more.

A note about COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic hit just as we were wrapping up our engagement period. Our final public workshop was held about a week before physical distancing began. Originally, we were planning to publish this summary document back in the spring, but I'm glad we pressed pause.

Through the pandemic, we've seen local businesses struggle but we've also seen an incredible outpouring of support from residents. We've seen a greater appreciation for the importance of walkable neighbourhoods and safer infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. It's also becoming very clear that strong local businesses are more important than ever to ensure a safe, thriving community. Stittsville Main Street is well-positioned to play a role in our recovery.

We want to hear from you!

If you have any feedback on this document, or if you want to share ideas, or have questions about this project, please contact us at glen.gower@ottawa.ca or **613-580-2476**. For more information and updates, visit my web site: glengower.ca/stittsville-main

A big thanks to everyone who has contributed to this project so far!



Glen Gower
City Councillor, Stittsville
October 2020

1. Recommendations

Based on the feedback gathered, we're recommending four steps to help advance revitalization.

1. Establish a steering committee

Through this engagement process we've met residents, business owners, former municipal planners, and organizations who care about the future of Stittsville Main Street and want to be involved. We recommend establishing a small steering committee (12 people) to guide the next steps. Membership would include a mix of business owners, residents, and community stakeholders. This group would continue developing plans and implementing ideas such as beautification, event planning, outreach, and other activities.

2. Improve cycling and pedestrian infrastructure

Stittsville is well-served by the east-west Trans Canada Trail, but lacks good north-south pathways and infrastructure. Feedback from residents came through loud and clear: There is strong support for creating safe cycling and pedestrian routes from Hazeldean Road to Fernbank. This includes things like wider sidewalks, more pedestrian crossings, and a safe cycling route along (or near) Stittsville Main. The current Community Design Plan calls for road modifications as each property of land is redeveloped, but that's a 20-year process. The City is in the process of updating the Transportation Master Plan and this is an opportunity to move Stittsville Main Street up on the priority list for upgrades.

3. Explore economic incentives for businesses and re-development

Based on the experience of other towns and cities that have embarked on main street revitalization efforts, it's clear that establishing a strong core of local businesses is necessary for success. One way that Ontario municipalities can encourage this is by implementing Community Improvement Plans (CIP) that focus on the maintenance, rehabilitation, development and re-development of targeted areas through incentives such as grants, incentives or tax deferrals to property owners. There are a number of models in place across the province and in Ottawa. Stittsville Main Street can also be a Petri dish to develop new economic incentives that would better support small community-based businesses in our City.

4. Establish benchmarks

It's hard to identify steps toward revitalization when it's not clear what we're working with. What's the current mix of businesses and other establishments on the street? What's the vacancy rate? What's the rental rate per square foot? How many homes are on the street? We recommend commissioning a basic market study to understand the environment and conditions to help guide next steps and measure progress.

2. Survey results

Focus #1: Economic Development

Figure 1 summarizes the types of businesses desired by survey respondents. Notably, most respondents indicated that food services (pubs, coffee shops and bakeries, etc.) and small niche or specialty stores (e.g., clothing stores, craft shops, health stores, kitchen/home stores, specialty groceries, etc.) should be attracted to Stittsville Main Street. Survey respondents also indicated that they appreciated the “small town feel” of Stittsville Main Street and thought examples of what already works include Quitters, Main Street Barber Shop, Brown’s Independent Grocer and the business fronts in the adjacent plaza, the community library, and the Trans Canada Trail.

Highlighted quotes from survey feedback

“In the absence of adequate public parking, and congested traffic conditions I would caution against simply trying to attract more business. Retail business is very volatile, given the rise of internet shopping. There may be a need for additional service focused business. Certainly there may be an opportunity for more quality dining/entertainment types of business. Regardless of the business type, it is my opinion that initially the plans should focus on what needs to be done to attract/support a sustainable business environment.”

“There are so many undeveloped spaces on Main Street. I want to walk the street, grab a coffee, and enjoy the community. I want a space that is family-friendly where

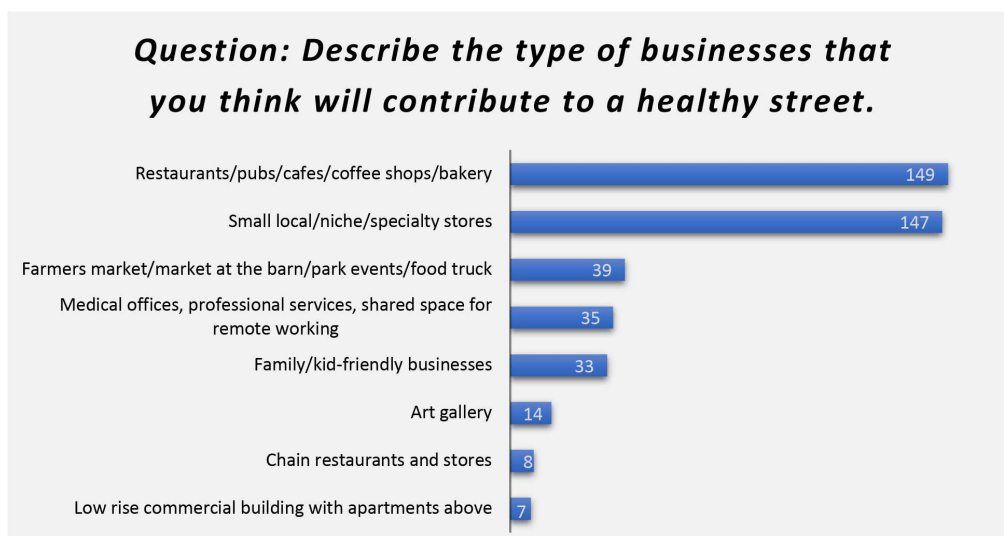
I can linger. Consider Guelph and their Carden Street redevelopment - City Hall and splash pad/skating rink (and generally how they have rebuilt the downtown core with leadership from community businesses).”

“We really need more healthy food options. Healthy, livable communities cannot survive on McDonald’s, pizza and pub food alone. As a plant-based family, we need more options to bring us to Stittsville Main.”

“Long-standing residents and business owners who have long laid claim to Main Street [are a barrier to development]. My understanding is that there is a concentration of ownership on Main Street with owners reluctant to be forward thinking. It also means addressing properties like the trailer dealerships that are legacies to another time and moving more toward a high street with local businesses. These groups need a mindset change. Let’s move toward a better community not something stuck in the past. More focus on Village atmosphere less focus on industrial Main Street.

“People living between Stittsville Main and Kanata often will shop in Kanata as it feels like an extra distance to go a bit further to Stittsville Main. We need to have more ‘shop at home’ campaigns. First Thursdays is a great start. Businesses working together to create coupon packs. We did an organized restaurant tour a few years ago, it was super cool, and it helped us learn about new great spots, including the many new food trucks.”

Figure 1



“Private commercial ownership will be the barrier. Small cafés and restaurants, craft type shops and clothing boutiques will need to be profitable and Stittsville doesn’t yet have the populations, so tourists will need to be seen as the consumers. How to attract outsiders will be a marketing challenge.”

Focus #2: Transportation and Mobility

Figure 2 summarizes the respondents’ prioritization of road function. They indicated that traffic reduction (especially large trucks) and increasing bike and pedestrian safety were their main priorities. Many felt that having safer and more accessible roads would help encourage businesses to move onto Stittsville Main Street and encourage visitors to linger and enjoy the area. The addition of bike lanes, bike parking, better lighting, crosswalks and wider sidewalks were viewed as essential steps to improving and balancing transportation in the area.

Highlighted quotes from survey feedback

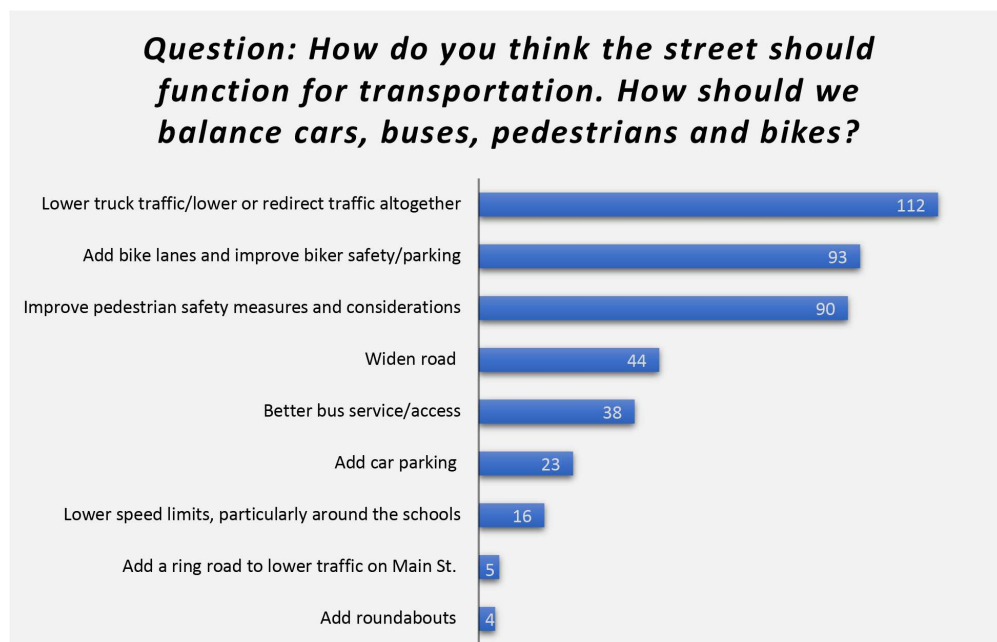
“Priority should be given to active transportation: pedestrians cyclists and users of public transit. The most livable cities in the world are walkable. Public transit use can be encouraged with more frequent bus service and bus shelters at each stop to protect from the elements and attract new users. Safe bike lanes are

also essential. Car use should be discouraged, although I recognize that this can be politically challenging. Diverting traffic really isn’t an option if there are no viable alternatives, however, if speed is an issue, there are many tools that can be used to force cars to slow down, such as road narrowing, even with something as simple as flower planters, and speed humps.”

“Your office could explore partnering with a company, such as Aurrigo (now in Kanata), to pilot an automated shuttle along Stittsville Main Street to move small groups of people the full length of the street on a loop.”

“Talk to OC Transpo about making another park and ride along Main Street. There are several spots that it would work really well, especially now with the reduction in express buses and the extensions of the LRT being delayed. Having a park and ride even at Abbott would substantially help the downtown core of Stittsville Main.”

Figure 2



“The biggest barrier will be the cars vs the bikes and pedestrian’s debate. I think the focus needs to be on prioritizing the drivers because the majority of residents in Stittsville and the surrounding areas commutes. A solution would be to offer multiple road reconstruction plans that residents can vote on or view before the final plans are set in motion.”

“[There is] limited space to expand and widen Main Street and [the] cost of upgrades and changes [will be a barrier]. During planning for future development, space along Main Street should be allocated for bike lanes and bus stops that allow for traffic flow. Wider pedestrian sidewalks should also be a focus.”

Focus #3: Beautification

Figure 3 summarizes respondent suggestions on how to beautify Stittsville Main Street. Although there were no questions in the survey specifically related to street maintenance or beautification, the reoccurring theme across most survey responses was the importance of maintaining the “small-town feel” and preserving Stittsville’s history and architecture. Green spaces, especially the Trans Canada Trail, were highly regarded and are considered an important part of the Stittsville charm and beauty. Other recommendations to promote a “small-town feel” were to keep ornate lampposts and to add hanging baskets or banners.

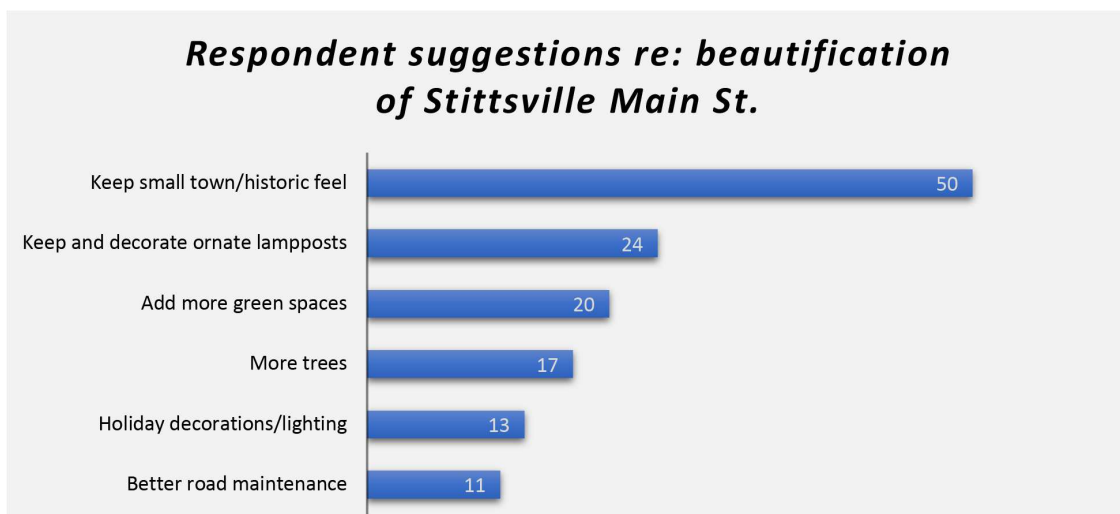
Some recommendations for green spaces included the addition of public gardens (for example, taking advantage of empty spaces like the walking path by the retirement home to create a garden or green space) and

adding smaller-sized green spaces between businesses and sitting areas. Lastly, there appeared to be general consensus to devise a plan for the overall look or theme of Stittsville Main, so that there would be a more natural flow in the aesthetics of the street, businesses and park.

Highlighted quotes from survey feedback

“Please consider protecting and dedicating some of the green space west of West Ridge and north of Abbott, for a fenced off-leash dog park. Having one off Main Street would act as a hub and a gathering place but I don’t see any suitable space other than the lot south of Milano’s.”

Figure 3



“I would encourage the promotion of the history of Stittsville along the street. For example, there is reference to old architecture and buildings along the street. One idea would be to have regular plaques or history signs along the sidewalks for pedestrians to view.”

“Make it a gardening destination with unique and creative plantings (e.g., flower sculptures), flower markets and exchanges, etc. Perhaps some fountains/water features at key nodes to create gathering and resting places. The gardening theme could tie in well with the farmers market.”

“Build upon the gorgeous greenspace connections here with more beautiful spaces to stop, read, play, without it

feeling too “engineered”. The village square is great! Can there be another something like that, even if it’s small? Or tiny mini parks in partnership with businesses, in corners of lots (like the main plazas) sort of like the surprising and fun pop up mini benches and relaxing spaces I’ve enjoyed street side in the Glebe and downtown. I don’t know if this is ever done but if the city can buy up a couple of strategic lots along main street or give incentives for cool things like this it would go a long way to encouraging growth. It will also attract more young families to this area and will be well-received by youth.”

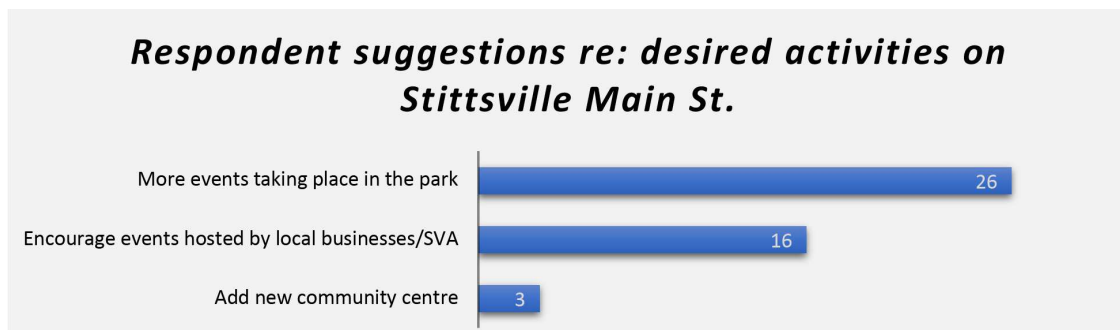
Focus #4: Activities

Figure 4 summarizes the respondents’ preferred activities and ideas to engage the community. Village Square Park was repeatedly mentioned as a prime location for community events and a pillar in the community. Events hosted by local businesses and the Stittsville Village Association (SVA) were seen as great examples to follow and build upon; Jo-Jo’s Pumpkin Patch party and Community Garden, SVA’s Christmas Parade of lights, the Councillor’s Movies in the Park were all named as events loved by the community and mentioned as to what they would like to see more. The addition of a community centre where local groups and residents could rent or hold gatherings was also mentioned.

Highlighted quotes from survey feedback:

“Love the idea of a rink at the Train park - I think this would bring a lot of people out for a skate under the Christmas lights etc. Suggest no hockey there if this happens. I think the community would come together around a rink there however small it is.”

Figure 4



Focus #5: Municipal Planning

Respondents provided feedback on what activities/areas should be prioritized and what the City of Ottawa's role could be. Figure 5 summarizes the recommendations on where to start; the most frequently listed priority was that a more functional road would be the most upstream and pressing need. Having better transportation, mobility and accessibility for drivers, bikers and pedestrians is key, with specific suggestions to reduce traffic, create bike lanes and add pedestrian crossings. Beautification and economic development were nearly equally cited as an initial step to make Stittsville more attractive.

Highlighted quotes from survey feedback:

“The downtown revitalization planning process that my department led included a steering committee, consisted of a range of stakeholders, which included but was not limited to members of the public, the local business community, individual property owners, other levels of government, real estate developers. Recommendations arising from the planning process were presented to municipal council by this committee (along with a staff recommendation). In great part, this approach ensured a grass roots/multi-stakeholder approach (and buy-in) to the revitalization planning process. Given the complex nature of such planning, my recommendation would be to first establish a similar committee (assuming that one has not yet been convened).

In terms of initial priorities, I would recommend identifying the low hanging fruit, which will provide for some momentum. From a cost/affordability perspective, initial focus may include expanding local public events/activities which will serve to attract people, increase awareness and gain traction with respect to the implementation of other goals/objectives.”

“From a newcomer's perspective, and with all due respect, the current streetscape appears to be a hodge-podge of buildings (both types and condition) and businesses with difficult public access. I am aware of a number of programs that are designed to celebrate events and attract people. How effective they are from an economic development perspective is unknown to me.

From experience (I was responsible for the downtown renewal of a SW Ontario City), the starting point for most main street programs was the creation of a downtown secondary plan (DSP), which served to provide the vision, goals/objectives, implementation strategy, and performance metrics. The DSP is a comprehensive document which included and prioritized such matters as parking, private building restoration, municipal infrastructure upgrades, economic development programming, public/private sector investment, streetscape improvements, transportation, etc.”

“Parking, public washrooms are key. Businesses are not going to be able to provide both to the public, unless they are patrons.”

Figure 5

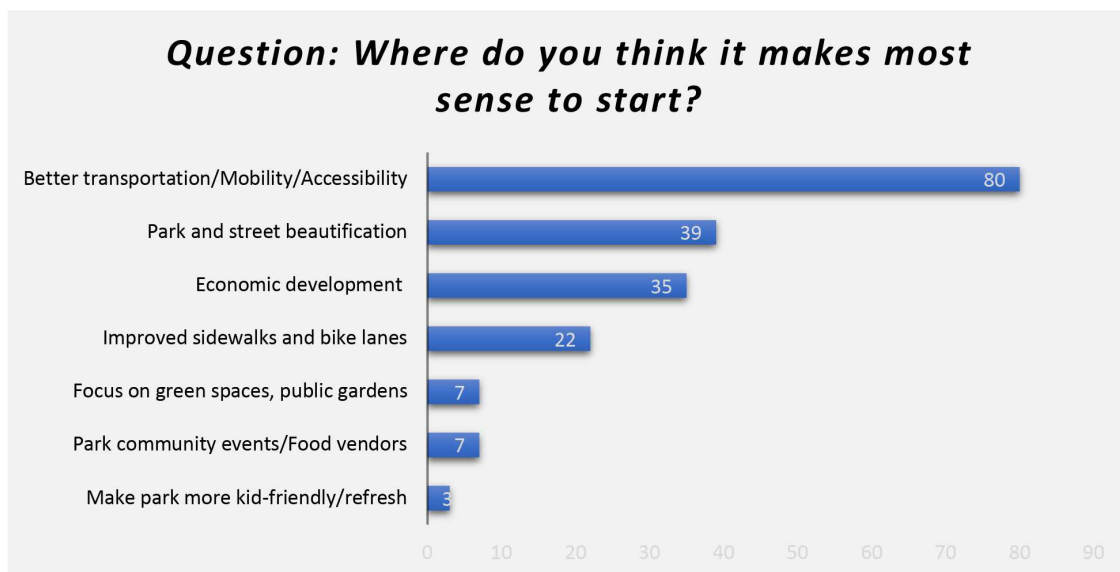


Figure 6 summarizes the respondents' expectations from the City of Ottawa in the revitalization process. The City was seen as critical in terms of providing experience and expertise in developing a plan for the design and infrastructure. Funding and the implementation of road safety measures (and reducing traffic) were also viewed as critical roles the City must fulfill.

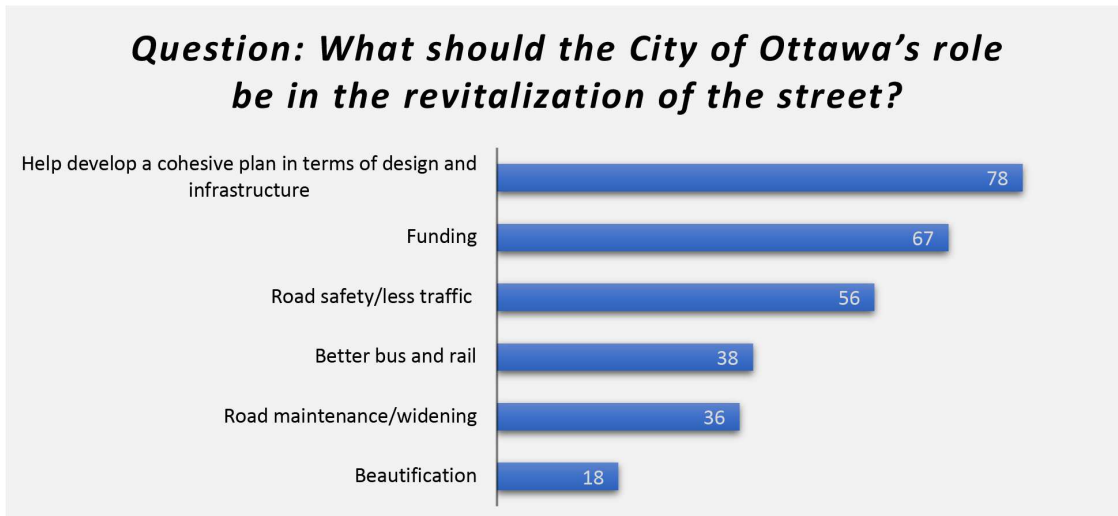
Highlighted quotes from survey feedback:

“Can we entrench a common look and feel to the Stittsville Main Street with the building code. For example, the village on Mont Tremblant with strict rules for commercial signage. OK, in this case, it was made to look like a fake ski resort but the same could be done to Stittsville with, let's say, a train station look near Abbott Street...”

“Barriers: Possibly lack of businesses willing to build or move to Main Street. Solutions: Incentives from the City (tax breaks, grants, easier permit access, etc.)”

“Develop the area to be in line with climate change policies, sustainable development practises and the new master plan that promotes walking, cycling and transit. It benefits the area, the environment and almost certainly the local economy.”

Figure 6



3. Additional feedback

Economic development

Find a big investor and anchor business

Variety: Cafés, florist, bakery, library, medical, fire station, government services, restaurants, Legion, hair salons, barbers

More businesses with village feel like new Whole Health pharmacy

Community-minded businesses: Jo-Jo's, Quitters, Little Red Spade

More small business density

More jobs so people don't have to leave the community to go to work

Municipal parking lot needs more signage/awareness

Ensure businesses have adequate parking

Financial incentives for growth/revitalization

Too many incompatible businesses

Outdoor spaces for gathering (patios, etc.)

Nightlife options (brewery or distillery)

Small cinema/theatre or live music

Buildings with upper level professional services and retail below

Create an identity – linked to history?

Strong business association

WiFi hot spot everywhere

Shop local loyalty program

Encourage independent retailers as opposed to big chains

Arcade bar

A place for live music

Build/establish more businesses closer to the southern end

Limit big box stores, more mom & pops / unique boutiques

Cheese store, coffee roastery

Youth employment opportunities

Transportation and mobility

Wide sidewalks

Extend timing for walk signals

Benches for seniors

Need big panels reminding people to slow down and LOOK before they drive through an intersection

Solar-powered sidewalks (University of Waterloo is developing)

Traffic is a big deterrent; it's too busy and people avoid the street

Multi-use path on Main for bikes & pedestrians

Work on removing trucks and heavy / fast-moving traffic

Pedestrian crossovers

More bike racks in parks

Stittsville bike maps

Begin with transportation and mobility

Bike lanes

Create pull-overs for buses so traffic doesn't have to stop and wait for buses

Limit cars during certain hours, increase bike hours. There could be a bike-only lane during the Summer

Advertise/signage – remind that Main Street isn't a throughfare, it's a main street so you need to slow down

Complete Robert Grant Avenue to divert traffic from Stittsville Main Street

Lighting for pedestrians

Bike rentals

Traffic lights should not be in sequence

Make more bus, car, bike & pedestrian friendly

More pathways incorporated

Single lanes on Main Street

Activities

Skating rink at Village Square Park

Washrooms at Village Square Park

Emphasize Village Square as a community meeting place

Annual event that would draw people from outside Stittsville

Ice sculptures?

Enhance the market at Village Square Park

First Thursdays event

Trolley/train replica shuttle from Jackson Trails to Fernbank
or the Goulbourn museum

Summer festival/parades

Outdoor live theatre

“Selfie signage” for Stittsville

Self-guided walking tours

Promote Trans Canada Trail

Pickleball court

Music or movie night in the park

Bike parade

Restaurant/pub crawls (like in Carleton Place)

Period re-enactments of historical Stittsville

Central display of heritage sites

More teen/pre-teen events and family events

Embrace Pride Month

Physical activity events: yoga, tai chi, martial arts, line dancing, etc.

Food truck festivals

Beautification

- Old-fashioned charm
- Street lights & flower baskets
- Signage for heritage
- More flowers
- Encourage historic character buildings
- Unify the look along the street
- “Almonte-style” vs. “Kanata-style” development
- Organize service clubs (Rotary, Lions, etc.) to work on beautification
- Lighting upgrades
- Revitalize train park
- Murals
- Flags on signposts
- Sculptures
- Consistency in building styles / not hodge-podge
- Keep the historical vibe
- Tie north to south in redesign
- Brightly coloured chairs with planters that volunteers can maintain
- Large water fountain or lazy river

Municipal planning

- Streamline process for new businesses (less red tape)
- Focus on Main @ Abbott first and then extend from there
- Identify properties along the street where there can be mini parking lots
- Limit high rise buildings
- Protect greenery
- No more housing along the street, more businesses
- Commercial on the bottom floor, housing on top