

Meeting Summary

Project Name: Main Avenue Local Concept Development Study
Public Information Center #1

Date/Time: January 28, 2020, 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM, 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Location: Sonia Sotomayor School No. 21 – Multi-Purpose Room

Prepared by: Sam Schwartz Consulting LLC and Arterial, LLC

Subject: Public Information Center #1

Participants: Open to the general public

The following summarizes the findings of the first Public Information Center (PIC) meeting. Participants were invited to walk between four stations to learn about various aspects of the project and most attendees began at station 1 and ended at station 4.

A total of 27 individuals attended this PIC per the sign-in sheet between the hours of 2:30 – 4:30 and 6:00 – 8:00, but an additional 3-4 individuals attended who did not sign in, unintentionally. 18 project team members representing NJTPA, Passaic County, City of Passaic, Sam Schwartz and Arterial facilitated this event.

Meeting Summary

I. Purpose of the Public Information Center

- Inform people about the scope of the Main Avenue Local Concept Development (LCD) Study
- Engage the public and get them excited about becoming involved
- Understand the community's concerns and aspirations for Main Avenue
- Maintain an on-going line of communication with members of the public that continues beyond the meeting
- Build support for demonstration project
- Solicit feedback on the Draft Project Purpose & Need Statement, and Goals and Objectives of the study

II. Format Overview

- The PIC follows an open house format
- Attendees were welcome to come at any time during the afternoon and/or evening sessions
- There were four stations with unique activities that engaged the public, gathered their concerns, and explored ideas for the future of Main Avenue

Station 1: Project Introduction

Objective: Orient people as they come in and provide a brief overview of complete streets and this project. This discussion included the demonstration project that is scheduled to be held in the Spring and will end by prompting people to sign up to participate.

Near this station was a kids area, consisting of a table in the middle of the room, where kids were encouraged to draw or use words to describe what they want Main Avenue to look like or include. The project team hung these drawings in the multi-purpose room up for public display in real time.

Format: 5-10 minute screen presentation and open discussion.

Station 1: Results/Feedback



- The project introduction table was the first station, where attendees were briefed about the main elements of the project by listening to a presentation about the project.
- Several iterations of the presentation were given to different groups of participants, both in English and Spanish.
- Key aspects included the project sponsors, the role of the consultants, the current stage and process for completion, methodology of work and the next steps.
- Raising awareness and interest about the demonstration project to be held in the spring.

STATION 2: TELL US ABOUT MAIN AVENUE

Objective: Understand existing assets and concerns of residents

Format: A *large* map of the project corridor where people can identify assets and concerns geographically using stickers, sticky notes, and markers.

STATION 2: RESULTS / FEEDBACK



The mapping activity was held at station No. 2 where participants were encouraged to leave their comments by relating their concerns or suggestions to specific points within the project area depicted on a large map (see photo above).

- Participants left 109 comments on the map, which were later transposed to a Google Map ([Link](#)) divided into the following groups: General Comments (red), Suggestions (green), Concerns (orange) and Contextual comments (blue).
- General comments did not have an actual location, whereas suggestions and concerns had pinpointed areas within the map. Contextual comments are ancillary information that are outside the scope of this project but relevant to understand.
- These comments were divided into five categories:
 1. Urban Open Spaces Design/Management: Design and management of Urban Open Spaces, which includes parks, plazas, streetscape, wayfinding, sidewalks, crosswalks, etc. These comments pertained to the spatial quality and beauty of the aforementioned elements along with the need for participatory processes.
 2. Pedestrian circulation: Regarding the comfort, safety and efficiency of pedestrian circulation.
 3. Street design: Concerning the design of streets, turning ratios, lane widths, safety, consistency and spaces allocated for different modes of transportation.
 4. Parking: Concerns and suggestions regarding the efficiency and availability of parking facilities.
 5. Transportation Infrastructure: Concerns and suggestions regarding the condition, availability and efficiency of transportation infrastructure such as proper bus shelters, boarding platforms, dedicated lanes and spatial organization.

- Some comments are labeled “Policy issues” when there are considerations beyond the project area and scope.
- **The following represent patterns in the comments made on the map** (*i.e. similar comments*)
 - Teachers who drive to work and seek parking around Main Ave were concerned about insufficient parking supply.
 - There are fewer overall suggestions and concerns about parking than there are about pedestrian infrastructure.
 - There is no data for the origin of trips that end looking for parking around Main Ave, but comments during the PIC might suggest that many drivers looking for parking around Main Avenue come from a relatively close proximity (neighboring town, etc.).
 - The lack of comfortable, efficient, safe public space is an overarching issue both as comments left on the map and conversations during the PIC.
 - There are specific mentions of the need and desire for beauty in the public realm: “beautification”, “build a pretty wall”, etc.
 - Existing crossing methods such as push-button intersections are inconvenient and don't help safe street crossing. Cars do not stop and the crossing is dangerous.
 - Consistent mention of wanting bikes/bike infrastructure as part of the cityscape
 - Consistent mention of the need for bike lanes and, specifically, separated bike lanes
 - There are recurring issues with sidewalk width (sidewalks not being wide enough), and large/long, inconvenient crossing distances at several points along Main Avenue, safety is an issue at designated pedestrian crossings
 - Most of the street design issues were recorded from the pedestrian perspective rather than a driver's perspective. Many attendees seemed to have an understanding of pedestrian safety, space allocation and the importance of a good street level experience.
 - Transportation infrastructure issues circle around the lack of proper facilities for parking, boarding/alighting and idling of buses and Jitneys. There are concerns about the proper sharing of street space by buses, licensed Jitneys and “pirate” Jitneys (unlicensed Jitneys were referred to as “pirate jitneys” by the locals).
 - There is a generalized understanding of current trends of street design: separation of uses, shared spaces, road diets and traffic calming.
 - Several participants mentioned a need for proper spaces for trash collection. Solutions for this issue may be more policy-based than design-based. Regardless, it may be worth looking at some design solution to mitigate the impact of trash on Main Avenue.
 - Consistent mention of the need for public space with seating, shade, lighting, civic spaces, dog parks, recreational spaces and other pedestrian amenities.
 - Specific mention of Placemaking and the need to keep the clock on the triangle across the Board of Education pocket park. The need for spaces with identity came up repeatedly.

- There is a need for landmarks that boost identity and make the street easily recognizable: the existing clock on Howe Ave., water fountains, the existing monument on Armory Park, an amphitheater, a music venue
- Increased walkability: wider sidewalks, safer crossings, lighting, beautiful fencing, trees
- Participants expressed some concerns about displacement of current residents and businesses and the abandonment of storefronts
- Historic, demolished cinema theaters were mentioned as a historical identity element.
- Several participants recommend building up enclosures, beautifying fences and giving borders to the sidewalks.
- Consider pick-up/drop-off areas associated with the schools
- There is a desire for entertainment/cultural spaces that attract people downtown
- **Patterns derived from conversations during PIC and other comments**
 - There will be a need for ancillary policy/design recommendations for surrounding streets outside of the project area
 - Place names have been Latinized and are consistent: "Calle Monroy". This is a source of identity that should be given some attention
 - There is a pattern derived from the geolocation of comments on the map. The comments written towards Monroe Street in the north are more about street design and transportation infrastructure. Those left towards Gregory Avenue in the south are more concerned with Urban Open Space design and pedestrian safety
 - Main Avenue is perceived as an area for families, with requirements that reflect the needs of people with children and children using the public realm by themselves.
 - The concern expressed regarding "not enough parking" is a repeating theme at outreach meetings. It usually underlies a concern for the general lack of economic vitality and spending foot traffic. These issues might be resolved with better design but generally need accompanying policy addressing Economic Development
 - Medians used to have public art and some miss the landmark quality of those elements
 - Movie theaters were also beloved landmarks that have been demolished and left a sense of lacking in cultural opportunities by some long time neighbors
 - The benchmark for good public spaces is Botany Village Garfield, a few blocks away from the project area
 - There are no location-specific parking issues. All comments regarding parking are general for the area. There are no parking concerns or suggestions with a specific location on the map.

STATION 3: VISION FOR MAIN AVENUE

Objective: Understand people’s priorities and aspirations for the corridor and solve issues identified in station 2.

Format: Participants assembled a "street section" for Main Avenue using a kit of parts developed by the team, which included bike lanes, median treatments, sidewalks etc. Participants took photos with their finished street sections and the choices they made organizing their street section was documented by the project team and summarized below.

STATION 3: FEEDBACK



27 participants’ solutions for the Street Section Game were recorded during the PIC.

- Participants had a clean slate board depicting Main Avenue’s Right of way divided into 10 equal slots where they could place any combination of street design components.
- Each street design component was represented in a sheet of cardboard that could be placed and arranged at will within the right of way
- There were 7 single components and 3 doubles. The singles were Bus lane, Drive lane, Bike lane, Food Truck, Parklet, Parking and Sidewalk (as shown below):



- **Double elements were Extra wide sidewalk, Median w/angled parking and Park like median (as shown below):**



- The prevalence of each element throughout the 27 games was recorded and given a percentage score out of 27(100%)
- Insights and patterns derived from the 27 iterations of the Street Section Game include:
 - 7.4% did not place value on having sidewalks
 - 81.5% increased the width of sidewalks in the section
 - 40.7% introduced dedicated exclusive bus lanes
 - 55.6% introduced bike lanes
 - 11.1% transformed the section into a public space with at least 80% of the section for pedestrians and limited auto traffic
 - 25.9% bent the rules to create a unique section and 51.9% created an asymmetric section with travel lanes not equally distributed and sidewalks of varying widths on each side.
 - 11.1% made parking without travel lanes to access it. If linked to demands of more parking might denote poor understanding of the dynamics of traffic and congestion
 - 3.7% transformed the entire avenue into a pedestrian space with limited access to service/vending vehicles
 - 37% acknowledged the need for shared spaces for pedestrians, bikes, transit and cars; 14.8% still view streets as binary sidewalk-roadway
 - 11.1% understood the value of having dynamic, alternating uses in parts of the section, usually Food Trucks/parklets/on-street parking

- 44.4% highlighted the activity of Food Trucks. One solution replaces the sidewalk with a Food Truck, maybe as a desire for more active vending/dining on sidewalks
- 55.6% proposed road diets leaving only one lane per direction
- 14.8% devised a solution based on exclusive spaces that have only a regular-sized sidewalk and travel lanes for motorized vehicles.

Sample	27	100.0%
Element		
One wide sidewalk	10	37.0%
Two wide sidewalks	11	40.7%
Any combination of wide sidewalks	22	81.5%
Regular sidewalks	14	51.9%
No sidewalk -1 side	2	7.4%
Park median	17	63.0%
Bus lanes	13	48.1%
Dedicated bus lanes	11	40.7%
Shared bus lanes	2	7.4%
Bike lane	15	55.6%
On- or off-street parking	20	74.1%
No parking allowed	7	25.9%
Simultaneous on- and off-street parking	1	3.7%
>40% of section as parking	1	3.7%
Anomalous: parking w/o travel lane	3	11.1%
No car travel lanes	1	3.7%
One auto travel lane	3	11.1%
One auto travel lane/direction	15	55.6%
Two travel lanes - total 4 auto lanes	2	7.4%
Off-street parking: Multi-level structure at median	2	7.4%
Asymmetric section	14	51.9%
Stacked - alternating uses	3	11.1%
Food Trucks - alternative uses	12	44.4%
Parklets	4	14.8%
Median parking - as existing	2	7.4%
Other - Emergency lanes (?)	1	3.7%
<40% Bike-Ped	1	3.7%
40-60% Bike-Ped	8	29.6%
>60% Bike-Ped	18	66.7%
>80% Bike-Ped (Boulevard or public space)	3	11.1%
Bent rules (stacking/squeezing/scribbling/etc.)	7	25.9%
Shared spaces- 4 modes of transportation	10	37.0%
Exclusive spaces- auto + regular sidewalk	4	14.8%

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

General

- The effort to accommodate non-English speakers with not merely translations of the different activities but a totally bilingual experience was perceived as highly inclusive and encouraged more people to participate and interact with the various stations.
- Color and interactivity seem to have an effect on how people relate to the different activities. The playfulness and bright hues of the street section game caught people's eyes even before knowing how to participate.

Public Information Center specific opportunities

- There is an opportunity to increase awareness of the need for shared spaces that accommodate all users of various modes of transportation
- There is a widespread desire for better pedestrian spaces although very few concerns were raised about the lack of meeting places. This could indicate a degree of satisfaction with the current conditions that is an opportunity for learning more about what people like about their Main Avenue and build upon that.
- The replacement of place names with Spanish cognates is a strong indicative of elements of identity: such as "La Main" for Main Avenue or "Monroy" for Monroe Ave. from which the design solution can gain.
- There were mentions of a few distinguishable landmarks that have disappeared or been demolished in recent years, which may present the opportunity for re-introducing them into the public realm with the advantage of creating ties with users and a smoother acceptance process of the redesigned Main Avenue.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IDEAS

- Participants were shown ideas from previous demonstration projects in similar contexts. They were encouraged to contribute ideas for the Demonstration project to be implemented in the Spring.
- Most insight about the Demonstration project comes from casual conversation and not from specific contributions.
- A recurring topic among participants was the past vibrancy of the Main Avenue/Monroe Avenue area. In particular the activity of three theaters that showed movies and had A-List concerts. The Capitol Theater was specially mentioned as the venue of Rolling Stones and Stevie Wonder concerts.
- Many of the content ideas for the demonstration project will require the concurrence of local businesses, community leaders and volunteers to ensure that the activation of public space shows all the possibilities of a redesigned right of way
- Among ideas for the Demonstration project are:
 - Covering the median pavement with turf to transform it into a park
 - Re-striping and painting patterns on the roadway and sidewalk to underscore that the extent of the public realm is the entire right of way
 - Placing shade elements on the sidewalk along the demonstration project area

- Activating the space with live music, theater performances, food vendors and open air movie screenings
- Organizing smaller clusters of public space within the larger demonstration project area
- Placing public art and highlighting its role as conversation starter
- Implementing a pop-up local makers market
- Encouraging local restaurants and stores to join the demonstration project as a way of using their placemaking potential as a magnet for foot traffic
- Creating areas for sports such as a half basketball court within the demonstration project area and encourage its continuous use throughout the day
- Placing bike racks, seating, a dog pen, stage
- Piloting food truck exclusive metered parking with time limit for turnover at either side of the street and median
- Offering an al fresco community dinner
- Installing picnic tables for weekend brunch
- Dedicating some space to a playground for children
- Designing billboards and wayfinding elements to inform and educate users of the space about best practices and design alternatives for Main Avenue

STATION 4: Project Purpose & Need Statement, Survey, Mapping Tool

At the final station, attendees were encouraged to review the Draft Project Purpose & Need Statement, and fill out the PIC Comment Forms which allowed attendees to write comments on the project. Existing conditions documentation including the Community Profile, Public Involvement Action Plan, crash analysis, environmental screening report were also available for review. Attendees were also encouraged to fill out the public survey either through a tablet or printed copies and also use the crowdsource map which was available to them in tablets. Three (3) PIC comment forms were filled out and submitted at the PIC and two (2) PIC comment forms were submitted by mail or email to the Passaic County Project Manager, Nordan Murphy within the 30 day comment period for the project purpose and need. One (1) PIC comment form was received by Passaic County Engineering after the 30 day comment period on March 9.

The PIC comments received are attached to the Public Information Center Meeting Summary Report with personal contact information marked out (posted on the project website). Any responses to PIC comments are reflected in the Frequently Asked Questions on the project website. The input from the PIC comments received will provide information for the development of the goals and objectives of the project Purpose and Need Statement.

Project Team Members in Attendance

Aimee Jefferson – NJTPA

Sascha Frimpong – NJTPA

Michael Lysicatos – Passaic County

Sal Presti – Passaic County

Dennis Harrington – City of Passaic

Ricardo Fernandez – City of Passaic

Joe Buga – City of Passaic

Sandra Bedoya – Sam Schwartz Consulting, LLC

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Sergio Uzeta – Arterial, LLC

Jaime Izurieta – Arterial, LLC

Chase Mitchell – Arterial, LLC