

# **As We Heard It**

## **A Report on Feedback from on the Four Corners Project**

**December 2018**

One June 2 2018, my team and I hosted a community event at the corner of Queen Mary and Lola, often referred to as the 'Four Corners', in Overbrook. At this event, I asked the community to outline a vision for the future of this intersection. I listened to the community identify the need to improve safety, beautification, and engage further with the local businesses at this location.

My team then participated in a safety audit conducted by the Women's Initiatives for Safer Environments later that summer. I also reached out to the City of Ottawa staff for money to invest in the streetscape, and continued to engage the businesses. This fall I successfully secured a \$75,000 commitment from the City of Ottawa to invest in improving the Four Corners.

I wanted to get detailed feedback from residents about key priorities for this investment. I held a meeting with representatives of the Overbrook Community Association to discuss the range of options to explore. Then I organized a broader meeting with the community, where I hosted a series of round table discussions on different options. For residents who were not able to participate in this discussion, a survey was posted on my website that also reflected these areas.

Both the in person discussion and the online survey were designed to get clear direction from the community on which of two overarching approaches should be pursued by the City. One was to work towards partnerships with the property owners to invest in the privately owned streetscape. The second was to invest in in-road bulb outs. It was noted that the partnership option would require agreement from multiple stakeholders, such as the property owners and businesses along Queen Mary, and therefore could not be operationalized solely by the City of Ottawa. In addition to those two options, there were discussion groups focussed on beautification, safety and activation. It was fantastic to see nearly 50 residents come out and engage at this meeting. At the end of the evening, each discussion group reported their main priorities back to the full group.

The security discussion tables highlighted the need for improved visibility. Lighting, effective pruning, and maintenance of the green spaces were identified as important tools for achieving this visibility for the Four Corners. They connected how security is informed by beautification and activation of the space, sharing their interested in ideas such as public art, attractive street furniture and street parties.

The beautification groups also elaborated on the connection between beautification, safety and activation. They identified improved lighting as tool for safety alongside creating a sense of place. Street furniture and public art (on buildings and through surface treatments) were key priorities. Greening the space through more and improved plantings was another beautification priority. Each of the projects provide opportunities for the community to engage with the implementation.

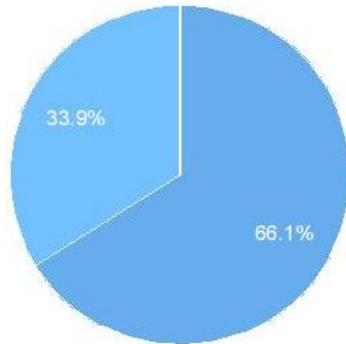
Finally, the activation tables presented a wide range of programming that could take place both in the public realm as well as within the businesses. Ideas such as street parties, performances/dances, sports/games, and pop up vendors were shared. They connected activation with improving security and beautification by suggesting the community could take part in creating public art as well as planting and maintaining improved green spaces.

By the end of the meeting, I was pleased to hear the overlapping priorities from all of the discussion groups. The core priorities of improved lighting, installing well-designed street furniture, and engaging the community in public events were well articulated. I was deeply impressed at the

community’s ability to pull together a shared vision for the Four Corners. The energy in that room is a testament to the commitment to this project and will be a critical resource as this project moves forward.

The survey results further reiterated this vision, as you can see in the responses below:

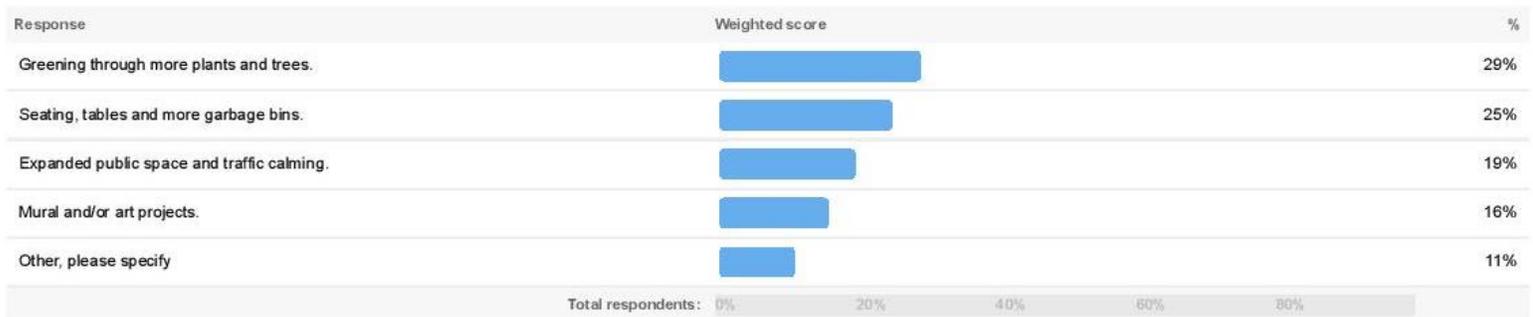
**1. Given the project budget of \$75,000, which do you consider to be a higher priority?**



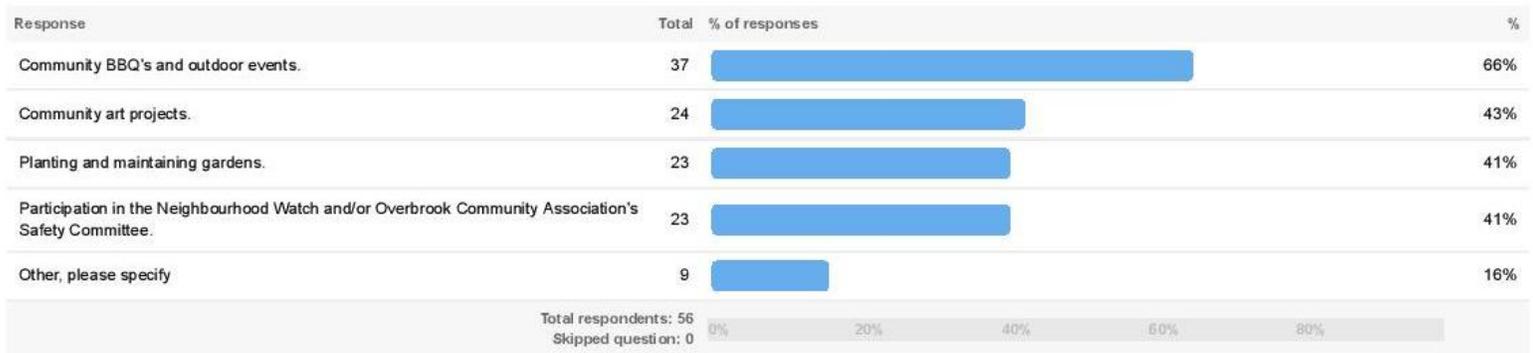
- 66% - Streetscaping opportunities, such as adding planters, seating, garbage bins, art, etc. (requires permission from private property owners along Queen Mary at Lola).
- 34% - Expanding the public space by building in-road-bulb-outs with plantings, resulting in traffic calming through narrowing of the road at the intersection.

n=56

**2. Please rate from 1 as the most important, the order of priority for the following beautification options.**



**3. Select all of the activities you would enjoy participating in at the Four Corners.**



Respondents reinforced the preference of prioritizing streetscaping in partnership with the local property owners and businesses. For beautification through streetscaping, priorities aligned with the greening and street furniture ideas noted in the community discussion groups.

The activities listed in the survey received a substantive level of interest, with an outdoor event topping the list. Such an outdoor event supports the ideas from the activation groups to hold fun community programming that not only brings residents together, but also provides opportunities to engage in beautification projects at the Four Corners.

I want to thank all of thank of the over 100 people who either joined me at Lorenzo's on December 4<sup>th</sup>, completed the survey, or wrote comments directly to my office over this public consultation process. It was great to see such a clear consensus emerge around improving lighting, beautifying the streetscape through attractive furniture, green spaces, art, and greater community engagement in events and beautification projects.

Stay tuned as stakeholders work together to meet these objectives. I hope this will be the first of many actions to build the community's vision of an attractive and engaging Four Corners.