

HARLEM AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Input Survey #2: Development and Design

The Southwest Conference of Mayors is sponsoring a series of surveys accessible from the project website as the primary tool for obtaining targeted public input and comment for the Harlem Avenue Corridor Plan project. The second public input survey dealt with Design and Development Preferences. The survey was divided into several sections, with questions about: the Respondent; Streetscape Preferences; Urban Design Preferences; and Land Use and Development. The survey also provided opportunities for free-form comments. The survey was rolled out in mid-April 2011, and was available through May 2011. The survey was publicized through several press articles and an email to stakeholders who had registered on the website or had taken Survey #1. There were 62 responses to the survey as of May 31, 2011.

Who Responded to the Survey?

Respondents had the option to provide information anonymously and skip questions if desired. Of those who did respond to descriptive questions, the project learned:

- 93% of respondents answered as residents of the Corridor.
- 43% were most familiar with the southern segment of the Corridor located between 143rd Street and I-80.

What do Respondents Think about Streetscape?

Streetscape questions dealt with assessment of conditions and availability of street furnishings, and landscaping styles and preferences.

When asked to characterize the condition of medians and parkway along the Corridor, the most frequent responses by segment were:

- 63rd Street to 95th Street: Poor / No Opinion
- 95th Street to 131st Street: Adequate
- 151st Street to I-80: Adequate

Questions pertaining to street furnishings (trash receptacles, benches, bike racks, bus shelters, etc.) indicated that respondents considered current conditions and quantity to be “Poor” but “Important” in most categories for future investment. Improved street lighting received the most votes for being the “Most Important” item for investment; public art was deemed “Unimportant” as an investment area.

Responses to visual preference questions seem to suggest that respondents favor more traditional manicured or grassy landscaping. Improved bus shelters were perceived favorably (79% “Yes”), but significant BRT-style infrastructure was not (59% “No”).

A majority of respondents (56%) indicated that the recent streetscape and signage improvements in selected areas of the Corridor have had a positive impact. However, freeform comments

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conveyed that some respondents are frustrated with maintenance issues related to landscaping and the medians, and perceive these expenditures as unnecessary.

What do Respondents Think about Urban Design?

Urban design questions dealt with assessment of architectural style and layout / form of the built environment.

When asked about form for new development along Harlem, most respondents favored a typical suburban style of building and parking layout, although pedestrian and bicycle access was noted as important.

The majority of respondents (42%) noted that specific architectural style was not important as long as quality is good.

Freeform comments included notes about not making the development environment so strict as to drive away potential new businesses. There were also about how poor design can have a negative impact on the surrounding areas.

What do Respondents Think about Development?

Development questions asked for feedback on economic development priorities and on preferred development opportunities.

When asked to comment on priorities, all categories (a range of economic development goals) were noted as “Important.”

- The two categories that received the most responses for “Most Important” were “Generating More Property or Sales Tax Revenues” (38%) and “Creating local jobs” (31%).
- The two categories that received the most number of “Unimportant” or “No Opinion” responses were “More Conveniently Located Municipal Facilities / Public Services” (38%) and “More Residential Options Convenient to Transit and Transportation” (31%).

In response to questions about where respondents shop, the majority did not consider Harlem Avenue as their primary shopping destination (67%). Orland Square Mall / LaGrange Road was the most commonly noted destination.

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Respondents were asked to comment on the concentration of certain business types along the Corridor, whether there are too few, adequate number, too many, or no opinion. For most retail categories, respondents noted an adequate supply of each business type. However, the following categories were noted as being in short supply:

- Entertainment Destinations (62%)
- Small, Locally-Owned Retail (61%)
- Sit-Down Restaurants (52%)

The three categories of businesses that received notable response as too prevalent are:

- Automobile Sales (40%)
- Transportation / Warehouse / Distribution Centers (38%)
- Manufacturing / Industrial Facilities (36%)

Response to a question pertaining to whether residential development along Harlem appropriate, was evenly split. However, freeform comments indicated concern about increased traffic, safety, and an existing glut of housing supply. The comments that were supportive of new residential suggested that it should be mixed-use or of higher density, which is consistent with response to the visual preference questions favoring townhouses or multi-family design styles.

How Will This Information Be Used?

The consultant team is reviewing the detailed survey results to enhance the analysis completed during the Existing Conditions phase of the project. As the consultant team progresses ideas that can contribute to improvement of transportation, economic development, and urban design/visual identity on the Corridor, this community input can help the shape of the solutions proposed.