

do·a·ble  
'dooəb(ə)l/

adj.

capable of being done or carried out

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary



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**01**

The Project



# WHO IS 8-80 CITIES?

8-80 Cities is a non-profit organization based in Toronto, Canada. We are dedicated to contributing to the transformation of cities into places where people can walk, bike, access public transit and visit vibrant parks and public places. Our approach is to engage people and communities across multiple sectors to inspire the creation of cities that are easily accessible, safe and enjoyable for all. We achieve our mission through grant projects, advocacy work and our innovative services.



## 8-80 Philosophy

If you create a city that's good for an 8 year old and good for an 80 year old, you will create a successful city for everyone.  
This is an 8-80 City.



8-80  
Cities  
Walk & Bike • Parks & Streets

80  
ies®

• For All



## Doable Neighbourhood Project Team

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# WHAT IS THE DOABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD PROJECT (DNP)?

Implementation of pilot projects to show, in the short-term, how communities can become great places for walking, cycling, animating park/public spaces and sociability.

The Doable Neighbourhood Project is a results-oriented initiative to create healthier communities in Ontario. Our approach is to build on community assets and empower local leaders to implement short-term, high impact pilot projects that enhance the neighbourhood's walkability, bikeability, and access to parks and public spaces. Although temporary, pilot projects were used to demonstrate that grassroots efforts can lead to long-term cultural shifts towards healthier cities.

Public health research has proven that the built environment and public health are intricately linked. The way we plan, design, and build our neighbourhoods has a direct impact on our ability to develop healthy lifestyles and habits. We have spent the last century building cities to accommodate the automobile. Our growing reliance on the automobile has led to a culture of inactivity. Today in Canada, seven out of ten adults and nine out of ten children do not get the daily recommended amounts of physical activity.<sup>1</sup> According to the Canadian Health Measures Survey, 17% of Canadian children and youth are overweight and an additional 9% are obese.<sup>2</sup>

## The Right to Mobility:

Everyone has the right to mobility. But, when you build cities for cars, you get more cars. The lack of safe walking or cycling networks and accessible public transit systems leaves 20% of Ontarians without reliable means of transportation. In Ontario, 14% of the population is between 5-14 years old (ineligible for a driver's license), and 5% is over the age of

74 (beginning to limit their driving). As a result, 2.4 million Ontarians are disadvantaged in terms of transportation choices, not counting those that choose not to drive or cannot afford an automobile.

## Community Connection:

Revitalizing neighbourhood parks and public spaces is a key strategy for improving social connectivity in our communities. This decline of community cohesion has detrimental effects on our mental health, and overall wellbeing. Knowing and trusting your neighbours, or having a dependable social network has been proven to enhance our overall happiness and life satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> Research shows that residents of neighbourhoods with greenery in common spaces are more likely to enjoy stronger social ties than those who live surrounded by barren concrete.<sup>5</sup>

There is so much that can be done to make our cities happier, healthier and more prosperous places. Some of those things will take years or decades to happen. But others can happen right now. They are happening. Every day in cities around the world citizens and city planners alike are showing us how small actions can scale up to have massive impact. The Doable Neighbourhood Project is designed to help people kickstart change in their communities on short timelines and modest budgets.



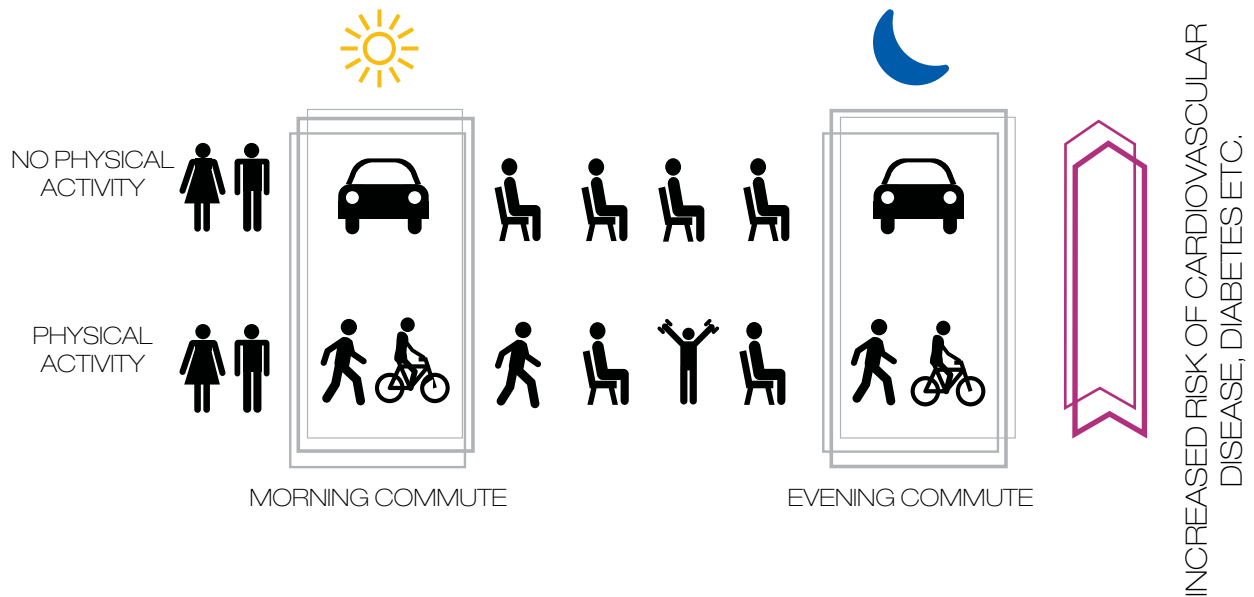


# THE GOAL

The goal of the DNP is to create healthier communities by reshaping the physical environment in a way that supports active modes of transportation (walking and cycling), and promotes the use of existing parks and public spaces.

Parks, public spaces, streets, and sidewalks are essential for fostering healthier cities. Designed properly, they can provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be physically active, whether by walking on the sidewalk, cycling in a bike lane, hiking a trail, or playing soccer on a field. Having access to public social spaces also enhances a person's emotional and spiritual well-being, partly by providing a place to mentally and physically relax.

10% of population health outcomes can be attributable to our physical or built environment, with an additional 50% being related to social and economic determinants, many of which are deeply interconnected with environments<sup>6</sup>



# KEY COMPONENTS OF THE DNP

The DNP addressed the following four aspects of great community building:

## 1. Health and the Built Environment

Taking a built environment approach to better public health is driven by the fact that our current health care system is not meeting the needs of most Canadians. According to the 2012 Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, Ontario's health care system needs to be dramatically reformed. Health care is the Ontario government's single biggest spending program. In 2010-11, the province spent \$44.77 billion on health. This is equivalent to 40.3% of its total spending on programs, and health care costs are only projected to increase in the future.<sup>7</sup> Even with massive investment in health care, Ontarians are only getting sicker. More of us are overweight, less active, and more susceptible to chronic disease than ever before.<sup>8</sup> It is clear we need a new approach to creating healthy communities that focuses on keeping people healthy, rather than fixing them after they are sick.

## 2. Parks and Public Spaces

Improving access to quality parks and public spaces improves rates of physical activity and reduces air pollution. Many studies have also shown that parks and public space access have positive effects on personal mental health and community cohesion. Exposure to nature immediately reduces our stress, gives us energy and enhances our mental alertness, attention, and cognitive performance.

Too often our parks and public spaces are undervalued by decision makers and community members alike, and this is reflected in the state of many parks and public spaces across Ontario. Did you know that, according to a recent report by Parks and Recreation Ontario, more than 50% of public recreation facilities in municipalities of all sizes are more than 50 years old? This is indicative of the general state of parks and recreation services in Ontario – we have lost sight of the important role these public facilities play in our communities, and they seem to be sliding farther down the political priorities list year after year.

We need to talk about how great places do more than just provide a nice place to spend a sunny afternoon; they play a vital role in the health of our economy, environment, society, our bodies, and our minds. According to a study conducted by Parks and Recreation Ontario in 2009, 67% of Ontarians would be willing to pay more for improved local services.<sup>10</sup>





### 3. Walkability

The healthiest and most vibrant communities around the world are unique in many ways. But there is one factor above all others that these communities have in common: they are, nearly without fail, highly walkable places.

There is good reason for this. Every day, every one of us is a pedestrian. No matter where we are going or how we choose to get there, every journey begins and ends with a walk. But by creating places that are built for walking, we flick a switch that unlocks the best our cities can offer us and creates communities that are healthier and richer in every way.

### 4. Cycling

A bicycle is a powerful tool that expands boundaries and connects people to neighbourhoods and essential services outside of their immediate community. Creating accessible, safe, and comfortable cycling networks requires infrastructure and maintenance. A great cycling network is one that connects all major community destinations to each other and with residential areas. Physical separation is also essential. Building bike lanes with physical buffers and barriers (ie. planters, bollards, etc.) is necessary to attract more cyclists. A truly bikeable community is one where it is safe, efficient, and comfortable to use bicycles for both recreational and daily commuting purposes.

### Importance of Streets as Public Space

The road network is a vital, but often overlooked component of the public realm. Streets are our cities largest public spaces. It is estimated that approximately 80% of a city's public space is composed of streets and sidewalks.<sup>12</sup> We need to re-think how these spaces can be used to create healthier cities. Streets can be places that not only facilitate mobility, but also provide space for community building, physical activity, forming neighbourhood identity and contributing to people's quality of life. In an effort to create communities that encourage healthy lifestyles and sustainability, many cities have been transforming vehicular streets into people-friendly public spaces. Providing safe, extensive infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians has also proven to alleviate congestion. Such infrastructure paves the way for affordable and convenient transportation, which in turn can have a profound impact on the economy. Traffic congestion contributes to delays in moving goods, lost productivity and higher fuel costs. Congestion costs the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area over \$3.3 billion in lost GDP every year.<sup>13</sup>





# WHY PILOT PROJECTS?

We know that major retrofits can bring positive community change. But big wins can take decades to pull off. With communities facing severe health and mobility challenges, change needs to happen sooner than that – and it can. By starting out with low cost, low risk, but high visibility initiatives, we can immediately begin to transform and improve our neighbourhoods within days or even hours.

The DNP integrated all four components: Health and the Built Environment, Parks & Public Spaces, Walkability and Cycling into each implemented pilot project.

A Doable pilot project is...

1. Implementable in the short term
2. Contributes to walkability, bikeability and sociability
3. Promotes health
4. Sparks conversation
5. Affordable (to both implement and for the community to participate)
6. Fun!!



# HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

At 8-80 Cities, we organize pilot project ideas into two broad categories: hardware and software. Software refer to project ideas that involve events, programming and public space management. Hardware project ideas include investment in physical infrastructure in the public realm.

## Software

Activities that animate and activate the public realm are one of the greatest predictors of park use.<sup>14</sup> That is why, when evaluating and planning for parks and public spaces it is important to not only focus on the physical qualities of the space, after all; a great park is so much more than the, grass, trees, benches and other features it may contain.

Making public spaces accessible is about more than providing safe infrastructure. It's also about creating an "invitation" that welcomes people into a space. This is where programming comes into play. Strong programming draws people into a space, which also adds to the site's visual attraction. In other words, activity and design are mutually dependent. Programming in the public realm can include everything from large-scale public events to small community festivals, a pick-up game of soccer at a community centre or a neighbourhood block party. The City of St. Thomas may host or fund some events, but its most important role is to enable residents to program the public realm through simple activities that build community and encourage physical activity.

Programming and animating the public realm must also consider the importance of seasonality. The goal is to activate the public realm so that people feel welcomed and drawn to these spaces 365 days of the year, during the day and night. The ways people use the public realm varies during the course of the day, week, season, and year. Diverse activities and programs such as skating rinks, outdoor markets, festival space, and public art can all be used to transition the public realm from one season to the next.





## Hardware

Well maintained infrastructure, or “hardware”, that supports a park’s uses and activities is an important component of creating a successful and well used park.

Great parks offer a balance of natural “green infrastructure” that allow people to absorb natural beauty and tranquility, while also providing the infrastructure to support a variety of uses that serves the needs and desires of the community. Public realm infrastructure must support a wide variety of activities including walking, cycling, resting, socializing, gathering and playing. Important elements include benches, community information boards, public art installations, lighting, street trees, play structures, water fountains, electrical outlets (for events) and bicycle parking.

While each of these elements contribute to the overall success of the public realm, the most important piece of infrastructure is the presence of accessible and comfortable seating. Moveable chairs allow people to rearrange the furniture to suit their needs, customize the spaces, and ultimately take ownership over the space. Lighting is also essential to the activation of a park. Effective lighting increases safety, draws people into the public realm, extends seasonal and temporal use and contributes to a sense of place.

Where appropriate, public realm infrastructure should also include physical protection from rain, snow, and wind. Strategically positioned trees and other plantings in public spaces and along streets can provide areas of shade, filter out unwanted noise or views, and create a sense of safety and enclosure. By infusing a space with colour and pleasant scents, natural elements can also stimulate the senses and increase enjoyment.



# OUR PROCESS

The first stage of the DNP was to select four community partners. The application process was launched in January 2014, and resulted in submissions from community organizations and municipalities across the province. Short-listed candidates were contacted for telephone interviews.

Each candidate was measured on a set of criteria, which were organized under two categories; organization, and community context. Under the first category, each candidate received a grade (0-5) based on the strength of their partnerships, their level of enthusiasm and perceived commitment, implementation experience, financial capacity, and the level of influence they have with local decision makers. The community context category considered the broader neighbourhood's level of marginalization (social, economic, etc.) and need for the potential benefits of the DNP.

As a result of this process, four unique neighbourhoods in Ontario were selected to participate in the DNP. The successful applicants represented: Downtown Brampton; the Town of Cochrane; New Toronto; and North St. Thomas. These communities vary in size and character, and each presented unique challenges and opportunities. The local partners were equally diverse, and include a business improvement association (Brampton), municipal government (Cochrane), community cycling advocates (New Toronto), and child and family service providers (St. Thomas).



-  Downtown Brampton
-  Cochrane
-  New Toronto
-  St. Thomas



# OUR PROCESS



## Phase 1: Engage the Community

8-80 Cities believes that all successful projects must be designed for the community, and by the community. This philosophy is embedded in the mandate of the DNP. Between March-September 2014, 8-80 Cities spoke to hundreds of residents and stakeholders in North St. Thomas about the assets and barriers in regards to walking, cycling, and visiting the parks and public spaces in their neighbourhood. The engagement process was designed to maximize inclusiveness, and included methods such as surveys, focus groups, structured workshops, interviews, and walking tours.



## Phase 2: Community Engagement Analysis + Pilot Project Planning

After compiling and consolidating the data and ideas from local residents, 8-80 Cities worked with the Elgin Children's Network to identify common themes and opportunities. These themes led to a timeline of prioritized pilot projects that could be implemented in the short, medium, and longer terms. Pilot projects were selected for their feasibility and ability to maximize community benefits.

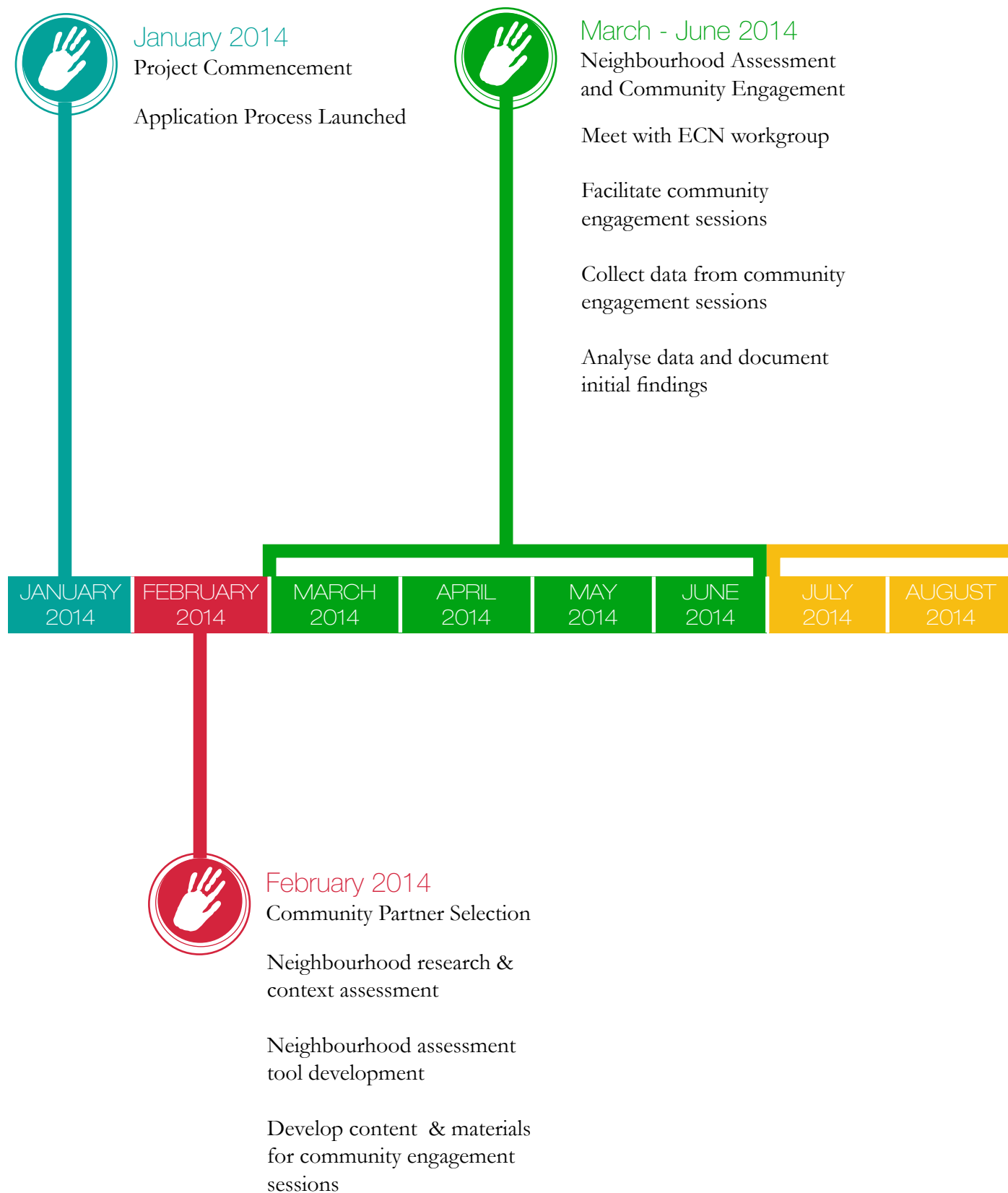


## Phase 3: Pilot Project Implementation

8-80 Cities supported the Elgin Children's Network to navigate the municipal permissions system, engage and recruit local community champions and volunteers who would be integral to getting each project off the ground.



# PROJECT TIMELINE







## August - December 2014 Pilot Project and Implementation Plan Development

Identify potential Pilot  
Projects

Develop three Pilot Projects  
(through community selection  
process and in conjunction  
with ECN)

Work with ECN and local  
government departments  
to develop three specific  
implementation plans for  
three chosen pilot projects

SEPTEMBER  
2014

OCTOBER  
2014

NOVEMBER  
2014

DECEMBER  
2014

JANUARY  
2015

FEBRUARY  
2015

MARCH  
2015



Pilot Project #1:  
Wayfinding  
Signage



## January - March 2015 Project Wrap-up

Support ECN with pilot  
project implementation

Doable Neighbourhood  
Project Wrap-Up



Pilot Project #2:  
North St. Thomas  
Ice Rink



## November - December 2014 Reporting

Review of Draft Report and  
Draft Implementation Plan

Feedback incorporated  
into Final Report and  
Implementation Plan

# ELGIN CHILDREN'S NETWORK

Elgin Children's Network (ECN) is a committee consisting of a broad range of community partners involved in children's services for Elgin County, supporting young families with children prenatally to six years of age. The Service Gaps Committee is a subcommittee of ECN and consists of community representatives including: Ontario Early Years Elgin-Middlesex-London, Family & Children's Services of St. Thomas & Elgin County, Elgin St. Thomas Public Health and West Elgin Community Health Centre.

In 2010, the Services Gap Committee began work to identify how and where local service gaps were occurring in children's services in North St. Thomas and two other neighbourhoods in St. Thomas. The three neighbourhoods were chosen as priorities based on an early years vulnerability assessment. Vulnerability was assessed using three criteria to predict risk in this demographic: Social Risk Index (SRI), population of children aged 0-6 years and Early Development Instrument (EDI) scores-percent vulnerable (low on one or more domains of school readiness). The overall goal of the research work, titled the *Family Involvement Project*, was to ensure the voices of parents in the community and specifically their views and concerns about their neighbourhoods were heard and acknowledged.

The Doable Neighbourhood Project is intended to continue and expand the public engagement process that started with the *Family Involvement Project*. The DNP also presents an opportunity for the ECN to work with community members to take action on the priorities already identified through initial engagement efforts.



**ElginChildren'sNetwork**

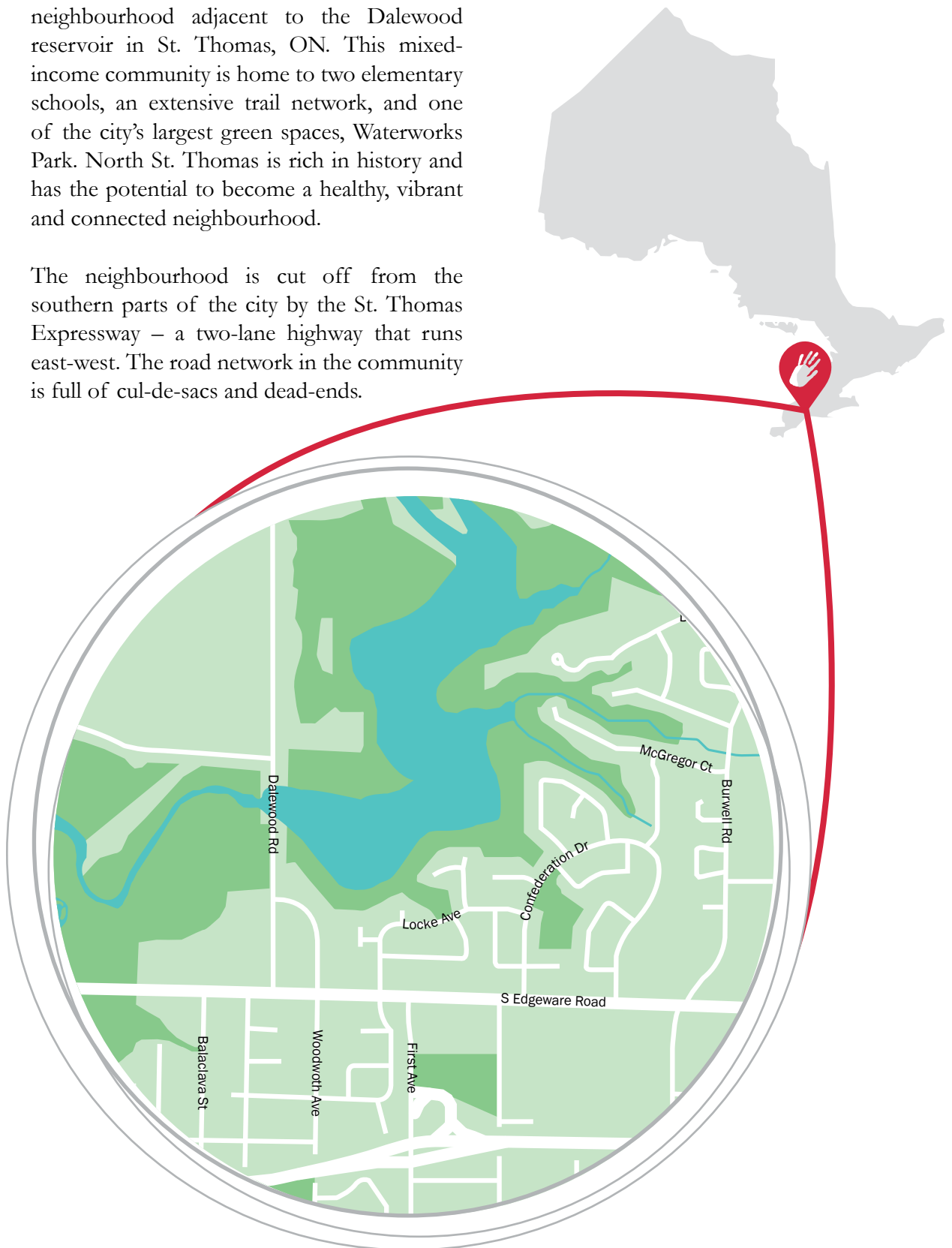




# NORTH ST. THOMAS NEIGHBOURHOOD

North St. Thomas is a residential neighbourhood adjacent to the Dalewood reservoir in St. Thomas, ON. This mixed-income community is home to two elementary schools, an extensive trail network, and one of the city's largest green spaces, Waterworks Park. North St. Thomas is rich in history and has the potential to become a healthy, vibrant and connected neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood is cut off from the southern parts of the city by the St. Thomas Expressway – a two-lane highway that runs east-west. The road network in the community is full of cul-de-sacs and dead-ends.









**02**

## Site Assessment

8-80 Cities began assessing North St. Thomas' walking, cycling and public space networks immediately after selecting the neighbourhood for the DNP. Background research and initial conversations with ECN provided baseline data on the existing assets and challenges in North St. Thomas. This information was supplemented during two site visits to the neighbourhood. The first site visit occurred April 23-25, 2014, with a subsequent trip taking place June 10-12. This section broadly describes the public realm conditions in North St. Thomas, as well as the tools and methodologies used by 8-80 Cities during the initial project phase.

### Community Asset Maps

These maps highlight the locations of various community assets including parks, public spaces, community centres, corner stores, healthcare facilities, social services, and schools. By identifying key destinations, DNP partners and staff were able to identify existing strengths and develop projects idea that would help increase access to local hubs.

### Doable Neighbourhood Assessment Tool

The Doable Neighbourhood Assessment tool was distributed to local project partners, who then passed it on through their networks. These detailed surveys provided baseline data on resident's perceptions of the walkability and bikeability of North St. Thomas. As a precursor to 8-80 City staff site visits, the Assessment tool helped frame the discussion on how to improve the health and safety of the community.

### Online Surveys

The Doable Neighbourhood Project Survey was a quick and accessible way to identify potential projects and existing challenges in North St. Thomas. The surveys also helped 8-80 Cities staff gauge how people are currently parks, public spaces, streets, and sidewalks. Survey questions included: How often do you bike in

your neighbourhood? What would make you walk more? What do you like most about living in your community? See the full survey: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/K6WQLGN](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/K6WQLGN)

### 8-80 Cities Site Visit

8-80 Cities first visit to North St. Thomas took place April 23-25, 2014. A subsequent trip occurred June 10-12, which allowed our staff to follow up with stakeholders and plan next steps with our project partners. Each site visit was carefully scheduled by ECN and 8-80 Cities to ensure that all key stakeholders were included in the DNP process. Special attention was given to hosting meetings with important stakeholders that are often excluded during public consultations such as youth, individuals with mobility challenges, lower-income families, and older adults.

A neighbourhood block party hosted between the two schools helped kick-off the DNP on April 23, 2014, and provided a valuable opportunity for 8-80 Cities to speak with residents. Following that launch event, each site visit included full days of community workshops and stakeholder focus groups. In between meetings, 8-80 Cities toured the neighbourhood to survey parks and public spaces, and identify existing assets and challenges in the walking and cycling networks. The site visits produced valuable feedback and dozens of ideas that shaped the later stages of the DNP.

# SITE ASSESSMENT - WALKABILITY

Walking is part of every journey we make. Even when driving we walk from the parking lot to our final destination. Similar to many Canadian neighbourhoods, North St. Thomas was built primarily for cars. Wide roads, surface parking lots, and disconnected street networks and cul-de-sacs are primary features of North St. Thomas' physical environment. South Edgeware Road epitomizes this problem, where cars are given two travel lanes, but only one side has a sidewalk. Despite this fact, many residents in St. Thomas rely on walking as their primary mode of transportation. This is particularly true among older adults and school-aged children.

The highest priority should be providing basic provision for pedestrians. In a *Family Involvement Project* survey, 94% of residents identified clear and accessible sidewalks as an important service to their family. The walking trails in North St. Thomas is a valuable lifestyle advantage, but they don't link up with the places people live or need to go. Currently, pedestrian infrastructure is limited in North St. Thomas. This is inadequate to invite more people to walk for pleasure or daily commuting.

## Strengths

**Proximity:** North St. Thomas has the potential to become a highly walkable community. Nearly all major destination are located within a ten-minute walking radius from most homes. The residential streets offer safer pedestrian thoroughfares, and informal pathways help connect the neighbourhood for cyclists and pedestrians.

**Recreational Paths:** The hiking trails and pathways through Waterworks Park and the larger Dalewood Reservoir are a valuable asset, and important draw for many people in the area. Trails and paths may encourage people to *go for a walk*, but they do not support walking as regular mode of transportation.

## Weaknesses

**Disconnected Sidewalks:** Although North St. Thomas destinations are within close proximity to one another, the pedestrian infrastructure needed to support non-motorized trips is lacking. Creating a safe and inviting environment for pedestrians requires a continuous network of well-maintained sidewalks and basic amenities such as benches, trees, and street lights.

**Lack of Safe Crossings:** South Edgeware Road cuts through the heart of this neighbourhood. While the majority of residences are located on the north side of South Edgeware, several important destinations are situated on the south side. Crossing the street as a pedestrian is especially difficult between 1st Avenue and Burwell Road. Installing a crosswalk at the Tim Hortons on South Edgeware was identified as a priority.





# SITE ASSESSMENT - CYCLING

Cycling can be the fastest and most convenient way to travel, with many secondary benefits to health and wellbeing. Creating this efficiency and feeling of comfort requires infrastructure and maintenance. Useful cycling networks are also characterized by an interconnected grid of separated bike lanes that reach important destinations. In many areas of North St. Thomas, the safest place to ride a bike is the sidewalk. However, adult cyclists can travel at an average speed of 20km/h, while most people walk at a pace of 5km/h. The two don't mix, with the exception of children cycling. To promote realistic mobility options, walking, cycling, and driving must coexist, but be separated.

## Strengths

**Size matters:** North St. Thomas is a small neighbourhood. As a result, many local trips are within easy cycling distance. Cycling is especially important for young community members. A bike provides independence and accessible mobility for children and youth too

young to drive. Both neighbourhood schools offer plenty of bicycle parking, but the racks are underused. This suggests that many more children could cycle to school if the routes were safer.

## Weaknesses

**Perceptions:** Many residents have negative perceptions of cycling as a viable means of transportation. These concerns are grounded in reasonable barriers such as climate, lack of safety, and an under-developed infrastructure network.

**Disconnected Network:** The only bike lane in North St. Thomas is located on South Edgeware Road, but does not extend to the most important destinations in the neighbourhood; the two schools and Waterworks Park. In addition, the South Edgeware bike lanes are not physically separated from traffic. This drastically decreases the sense of safety and protection for cyclists.

### Active Transportation in St. Thomas

The City of St. Thomas' Official Plan (2011) encourages the promotion of active transportation. The City initiatives could include the integration of walkable communities, street design and green corridors, pedestrian friendly streetscapes, accessibility, bicycle and automobile infrastructure and accessible public transit. The City of St. Thomas also has a plan for the establishment of a road cycling network that was proposed as part of the preparation of the City's Trails and Master Plan (approved in May 2008). The Plan proposed on-road cycling lane to be provided on Burwell Road and South Edgeware Road.

Walking for leisure ranked as the most popular activity identified in the City of St. Thomas' Recreation, Leisure & Parks Master Plan. Residents indicated the need to improve connectivity across the City with respect to bike and walking trails. Many suggested that increased trails and connections would encourage more people to become active and go outside to enjoy the City.

# SITE ASSESSMENT - PUBLIC SPACES

The importance of parks and public spaces in North St. Thomas is verified by a survey conducted by the Elgin Children's Network in 2011. Of the nearly 300 participants, 87% identified parks and athletic fields as an important place in their community (behind only schools and grocery stores). Fortunately, of those residents surveyed, only 7% did not currently have access to parks and athletic fields, the lowest rate of inaccessibility among all ten community assets listed. All residents in North St. Thomas live within a walkable distance of a park or public green space. The area is served by several neighbourhood parks, as well as the larger Waterworks Park which draws in visitors from across the city.

St. Thomas is part of the Carolinian Zone Bioregion and the Lower Kettle Creek Watershed. These two areas are home to numerous endangered species and species at risk. North St. Thomas has an abundance of green space, most notably Waterworks Park. Straddled by the Kettle Creek and the Waterworks Reservoir, Waterworks Park comprises 100 acres of woodlands, trails, open green space, playgrounds, a splash pad, and a disc golf course. North St. Thomas also has a network of neighbourhood parks, including Kin Park, Burwell Road Park, and Woodhaven Park. The Dalewood Trails network course through North St. Thomas, and the Dalewood Conservation area and campground is located just north of the neighbourhood.



## Strengths

**Green Space:** North St. Thomas has an abundance of green space. The Dalewood Reservoir serves as the community's backyard, while a series of neighbourhood parks mean that nearly all residents are within a five-minute walk of a green space. Waterworks Park is an invaluable community asset, which hosts a variety of activities for community members of all ages.

**Schools:** Monsignor Morrison and Locke's Public School serve as community hubs for the neighbourhood. The schools have gathering places, both inside and out, which have the potential to bring local residents together. The fields and green spaces between the buildings should be leveraged as public places for everyone to enjoy outside of school hours.

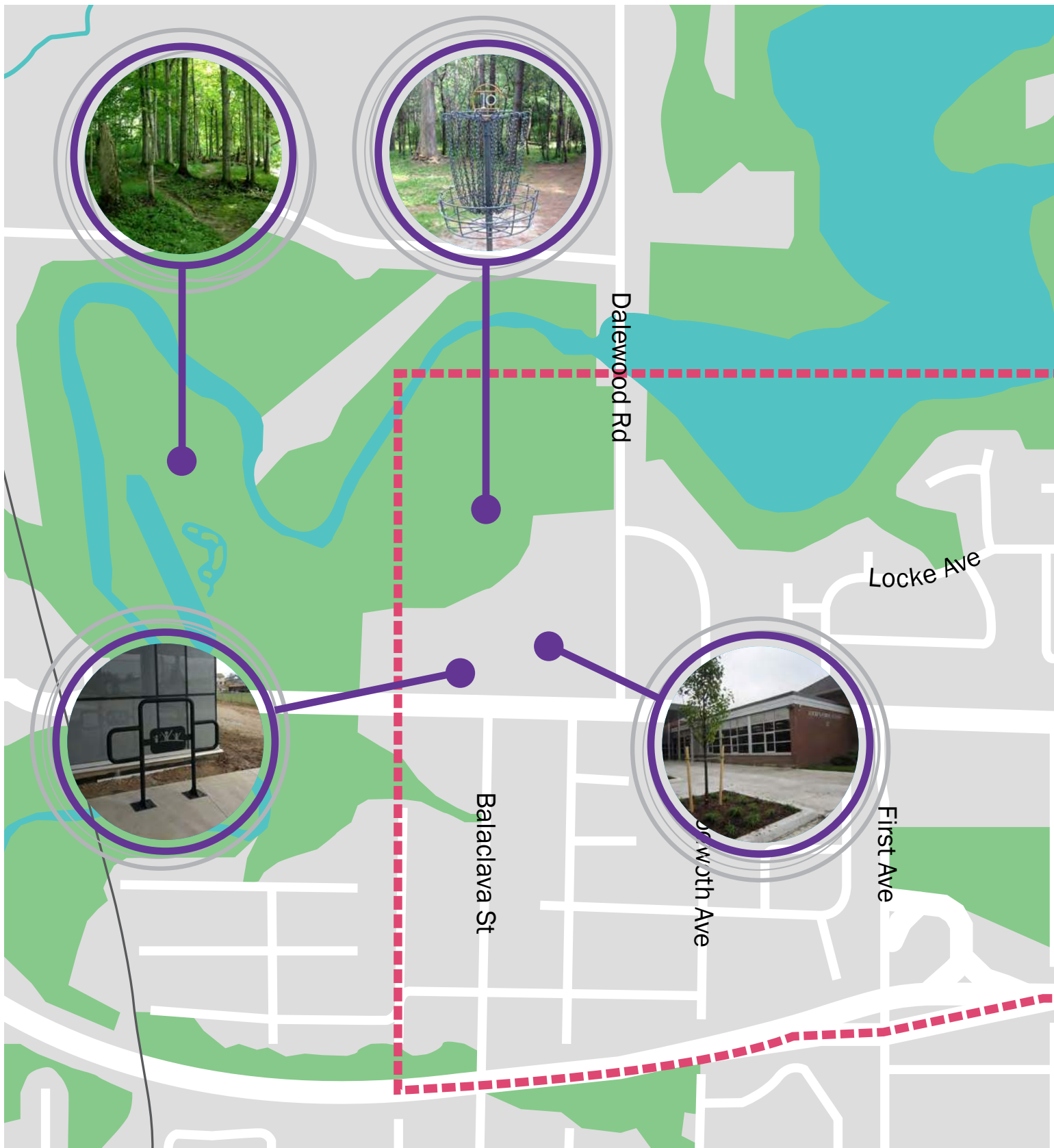
## Weaknesses

**Amenities at Public Parks:** People may be drawn to parks for the natural elements, but amenities are the glue that encourages them to stay and enjoy the space. Public washrooms, picnic benches, volleyball courts, playground structures, water fountains, and a variety of seating types (benches, moveable chairs, etc.), all encourage visitors to stay and enjoy the park. Kin and Woodhaven Parks would be greatly improved with small investments in basic amenities.

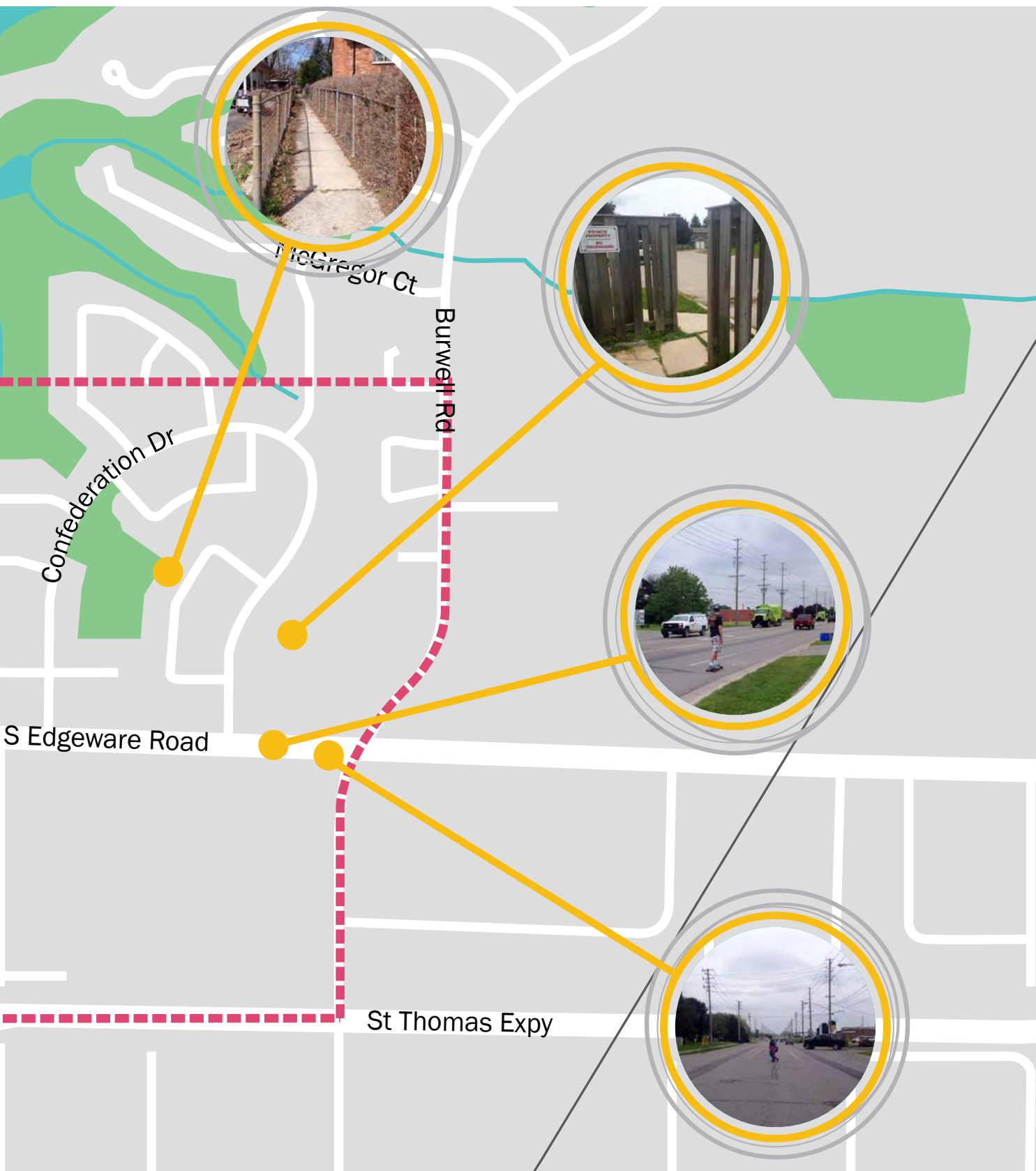
**Social Isolation:** Despite its small size, many residents report feelings of social isolation in North St. Thomas. Physical and socio-economic divides are particularly strong in the social and co-operative housing neighbourhoods.



# EXISTING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES MAP







# EXISTING ASSESTS/ONGOING INITIATIVES

## The Family Involvement Project <sup>15</sup>

The *Family Involvement Project* was designed by the Elgin Children's Network in an effort to understand how and where local service gaps were occurring for children in St. Thomas. Beginning in 2010, an early years vulnerability assessment identified three high-need neighbourhoods, including North St. Thomas. After these initial assessment, the FIP was carried out in two phases. Phase one focused on hearing from parents across three selected neighbourhoods through focus groups. The second phase included implementation of a community-wide survey of parents across the city.

The ECN applied to the DNP with the objective of building on their initial findings, and to begin addressing the challenges and opportunities identified during the FIP. Two priorities that emerged from the FIP that were carried over to the DNP include:

1) There is a need for safety awareness in North St. Thomas. Due to the limited transportation options available, many parents with children rely on walking or biking as their primary mode. This heightens the need to provide safety awareness and education for all road users (ie. safe motorist, pedestrian and cyclist practices), and the need for road safety enforcement. Residents' reliance on active modes of transportation also signals the urgency to improve the physical environment to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety (sidewalk maintenance, bike path accessibility), particularly for the most vulnerable residents (children, older adults).

2) There is a need for affordable recreation programs and services in North St. Thomas. Parents want affordable and accessible recreation activities. Many FIP participants cited poor transportation service as a pervasive barrier to accessing existing programs and activities.

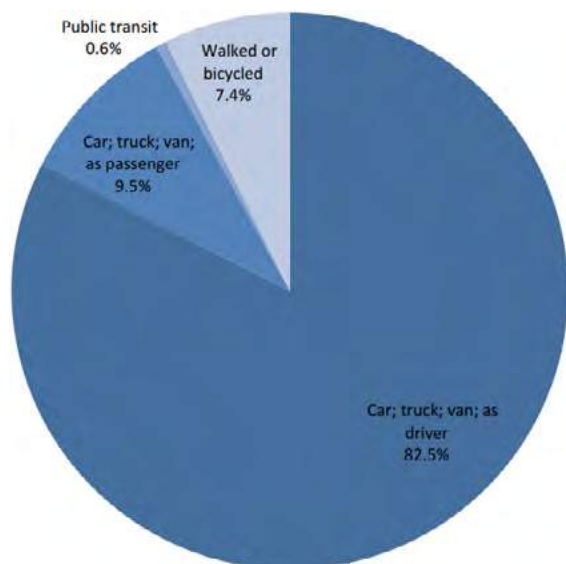
The FIP also identified existing community assets and challenges, as perceived by local residents.

“ How important are the following support services to you and your family? ”

“ Accessible Green Space: 71%  
Safe, Clean Parks: 62%  
Bike Paths: 67%  
Recreational Fields: 93%  
Accessible Trails: 91%  
Clear Sidewalks: 94% ”

- From the Family Involvement Project (2012)

Mode of transportation to work, St. Thomas and Elgin County, 2006



Source: 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

### Health and Active Transportation

If Ontario could:

- Increase active transportation by 5% to work and 5% to school
- Replace 5% of short trips currently made by cars with active transportation
- Boost public transit use by 9.8%

Then, we would:

- Prevent 338 premature deaths/year
- Prevent over 90 hospitalizations from heart and lung conditions/year
- Prevent over 1,000 cases of diabetes/year
- Prevent other chronic diseases, reduce injuries, increase social connectivity, improve the right to mobility, and allow people to age in place

### Community Health Status Report<sup>16</sup>

The *2010 Community Health Status Report* was conducted by Elgin St. Thomas Public Health to provide health status information on a range of public health indicators in St. Thomas and Elgin County. The report identifies challenges and successes with respect to the health of St. Thomas residents, and highlights health trends that could be changed or improved by increasing people's access to physical activity. Key health challenges related to a lack of physical activity that the DNP could address in North St. Thomas include:

- Leading cause of premature death in St. Thomas and Elgin County was cardiovascular disease;
- Compared to the Province, death from cardiovascular disease was experienced at younger ages;
- Lung disease was the second leading cause of premature death;
- Lower respiratory diseases caused 13% of all deaths;
- Diabetes-related hospitalization was higher locally;
- Injury-related hospitalizations was higher;
- Teen pregnancy rates were higher and did not decrease over time unlike the Province;
- High rates of morbidity and mortality from chronic diseases may be attributed to socioeconomic factors including education
- More than half the population was considered to be overweight or obese.





# SURVEY FINDINGS

In addition to public events and stakeholder interviews, 8-80 Cities distributed short surveys to North St. Thomas residents. Over 30 completed surveys were collected between April-June, 2014. The first half of the surveys are designed to determine residents' current behaviour in regards to walking, cycling, and visiting local parks and public spaces. The surveys conclude by asking participants to identify key variables that would encourage them to walk, bike, and visit local parks more often. The key findings are summarized below.

## Walking

North St. Thomas is a walking community, but a lack of connectivity and destinations prevent the neighbourhood from becoming a pedestrian haven. There is a wide range in residents' walking habits, with nearly 45% of those surveyed saying they walk less than 30 minutes per week, but 55% walk less than half an hour. Connected bike paths, more destinations, enhanced traffic safety, and walking clubs were all suggested as methods to increase walking behaviours.

“

This city needs to become more bike friendly.

”

## Cycling

Cycling demonstrates an excellent opportunity to increase healthier lifestyles in North St. Thomas. Nearly half of all respondents stated that cycling infrastructure (bike lanes, bike parking, etc.) is needed, while 38% cited a lack of equipment (bicycle, helmet, lock, etc.) as their primary barrier to cycling.

## Parks & Public Spaces

North St. Thomas residents value their green spaces, as demonstrated by the fact that 57% of residents visit local parks at least once per week. Over 80% of all respondents stated that regular programming, enhanced safety and basic amenities (washrooms, etc.) would make parks more of a destination

“

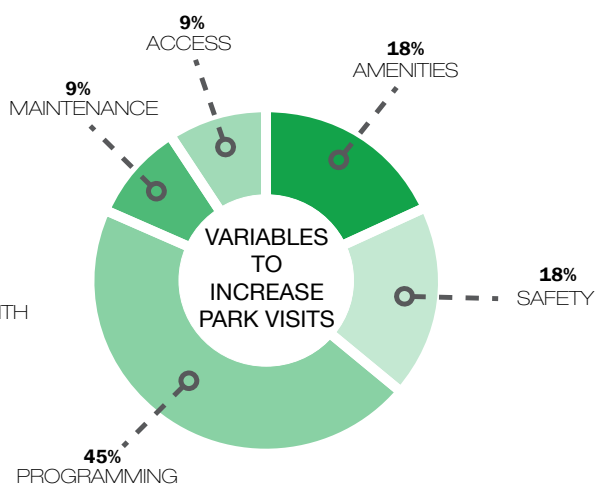
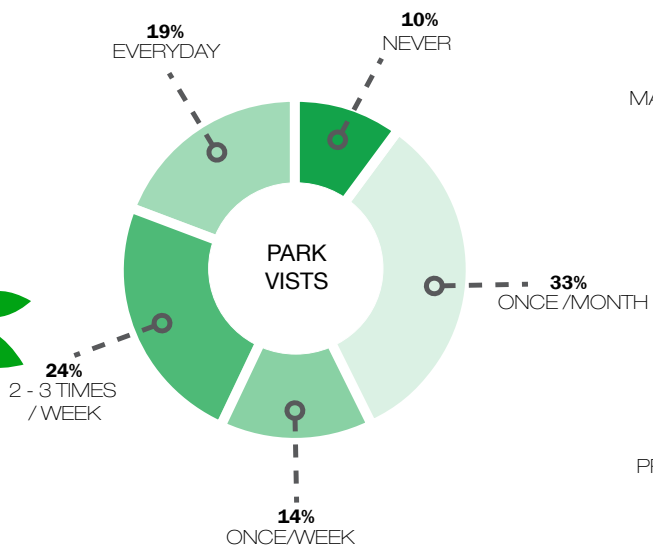
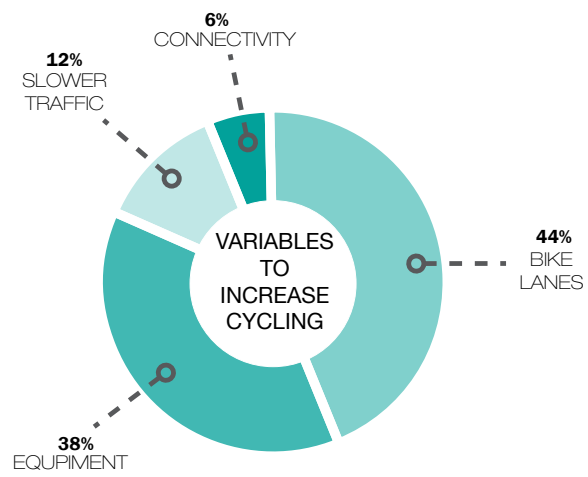
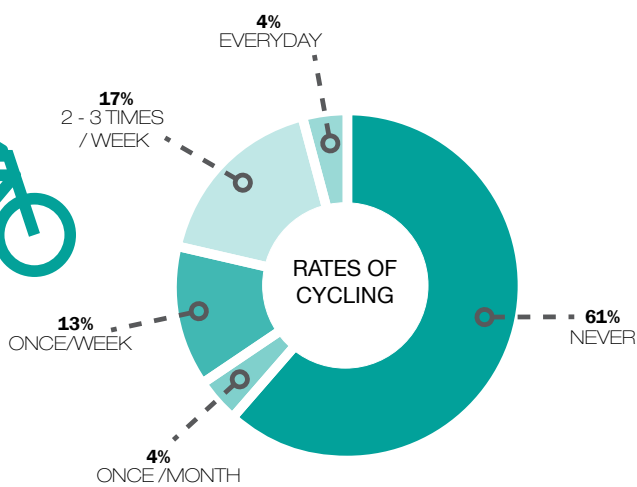
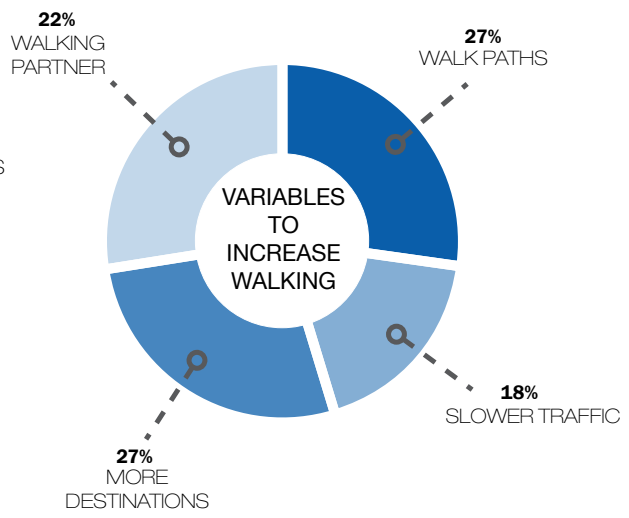
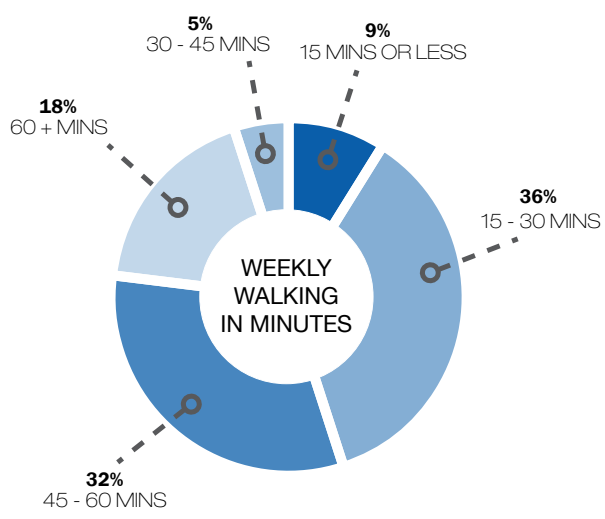
South Edgeware needs more 'bump-in' space where neighbours can meet.

”

“

The parks are nice, but the playgrounds are only fun for younger kids.

”



# BEHAVIOURAL MAPPING RESULTS

This information was collected by Doable Neighbourhood Project (DNP) volunteers through a Behavioural Mapping exercise. Volunteers spent one hour in various public places throughout North St. Thomas to observe and recorded information about demographics and behaviours of residents visiting the parks. Variables that were collected include the sex, age, ethnicity, activity, and time spent in that space. Volunteers were also positioned on South Edgeware Road across from Tim Horton's to record how many people jaywalked across the street. The exercises were conducted on four separate occasions: weekday mornings, weekday evenings, weekend mornings, and weekend evenings.

## Kin Park

Kin Park is a valuable, yet underused community green space. Behavioural Mapping exercises reveal that a large portion of visitors to this park are simply passing through to another destination. The play equipment draws children and young families into this space, which means that Kin Park must be kept as a safe place. Greater utilization of the baseball diamond and wide fields in the back of the park could draw many more people into this accessible space.

## Waterworks Park

Waterworks Park is North St. Thomas' greatest natural asset. This park supports a wide variety of activities for residents of all ages and income levels. Waterworks was, by a large margin, the most common answer among DNP engagement participants when asked to name their favourite place in North St. Thomas. Over 300% more people visited Waterworks Park than Kin Park during the Behavioural Mapping exercise. On average, visitors spend 31 minutes in Waterworks Park, which is a promising sign that people feel a sense of ownership and

comfort with this green space. Efforts for improving this park should focus on increasing accessibility (improving the safety of the sloped access road), and enhancing safety at night through additional lighting.

## Tim Hortons on South Edgeware Road

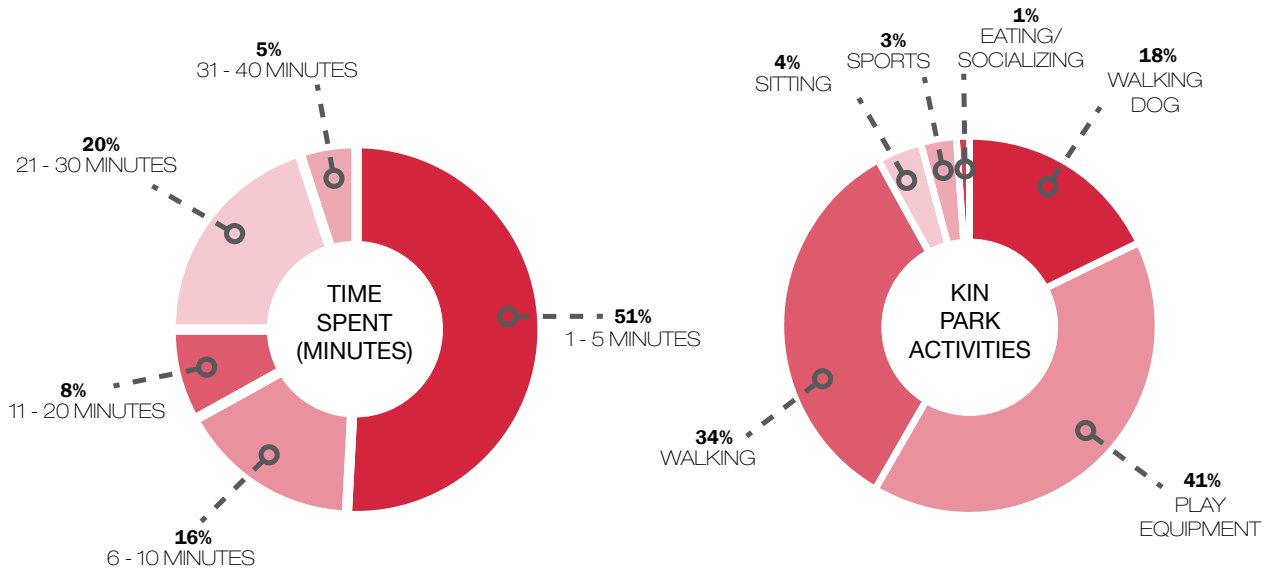
As the only sit-down restaurant in North St. Thomas, the Tim Hortons on South Edgeware Road is a popular destination. During two site visits, DNP staff observed that pedestrians on the north side of South Edgeware Road tend to jaywalk across the street to enter Tim Hortons on the south side. When they leave, these same pedestrians are equally as likely to jaywalk back across the street. This behaviour is technically illegal and dangerous, but entirely understandable. The nearest crossing points to Tim Hortons are 200 metres to the east at Burwell Road, and 600 metres to the west at First Avenue. For these reasons, the Tim Hortons on South Edgeware Road would be the ideal candidate for a neighbourhood crosswalk.

## Methodology

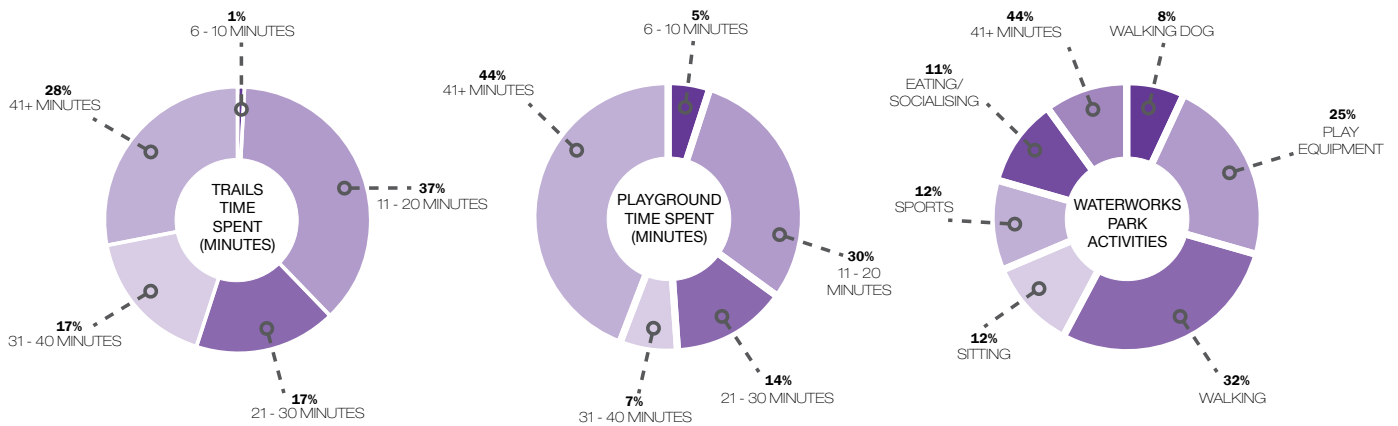
Volunteers counted pedestrians jaywalking to Tim Hortons for one hour on one weekday morning, one weekday evening, one weekend morning, and one weekend evening (four hours total). Although the numbers are lower than expected, these results are likely due to a limited sample size and weather on those particular days. The fact remains that many engagement participants want to see slower traffic and safer crossing points for pedestrians along South Edgeware Road.



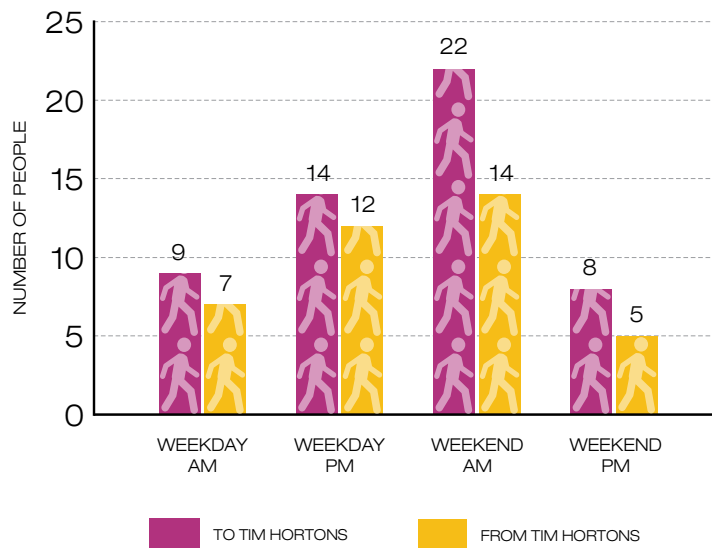
## KIN PARK SURVEY RESULTS

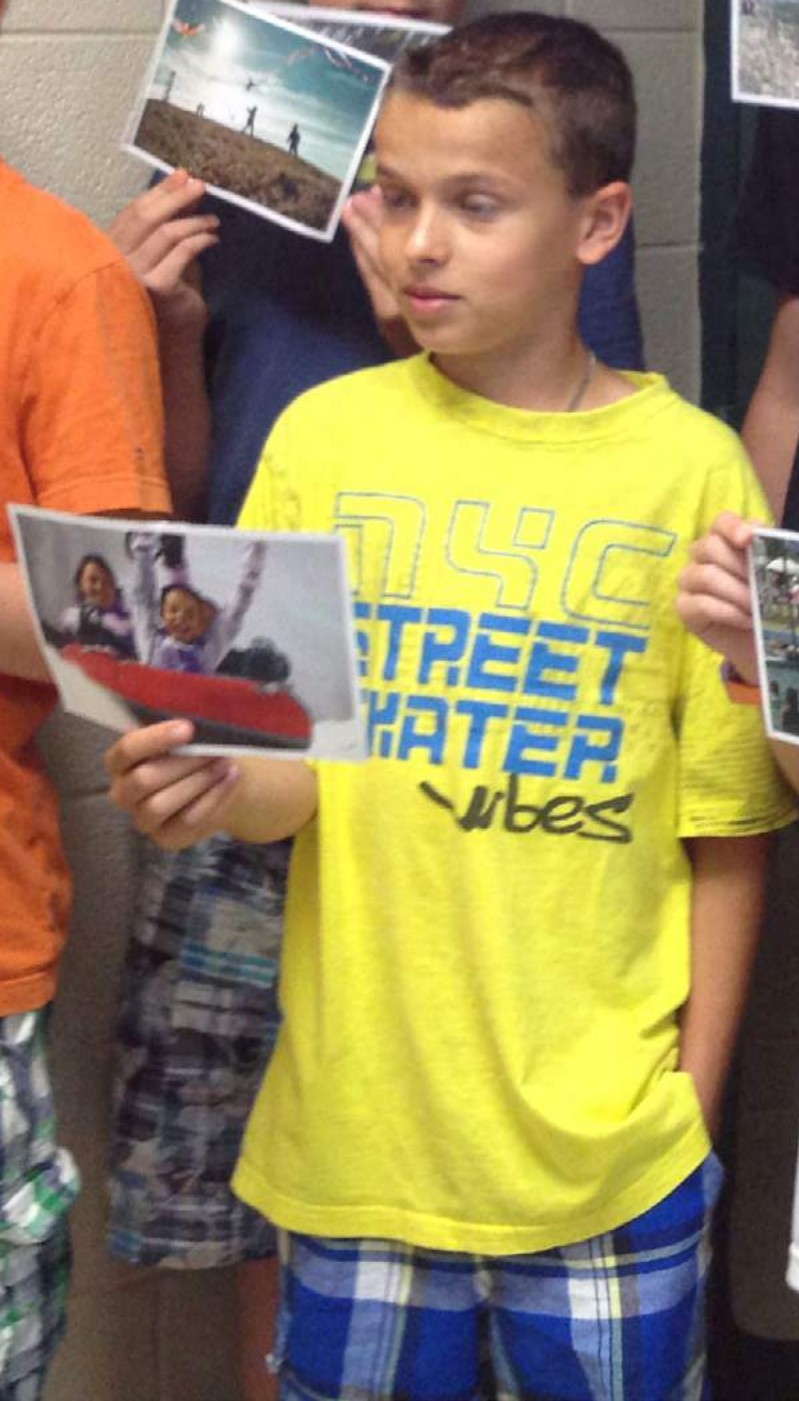
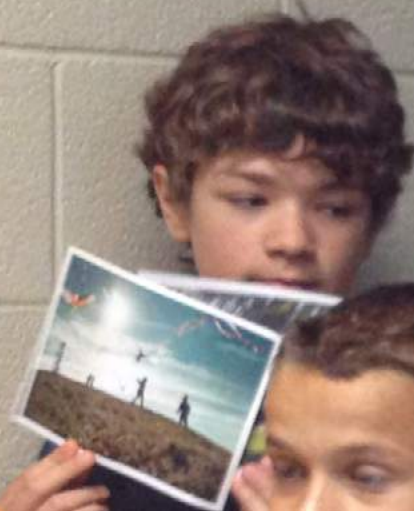
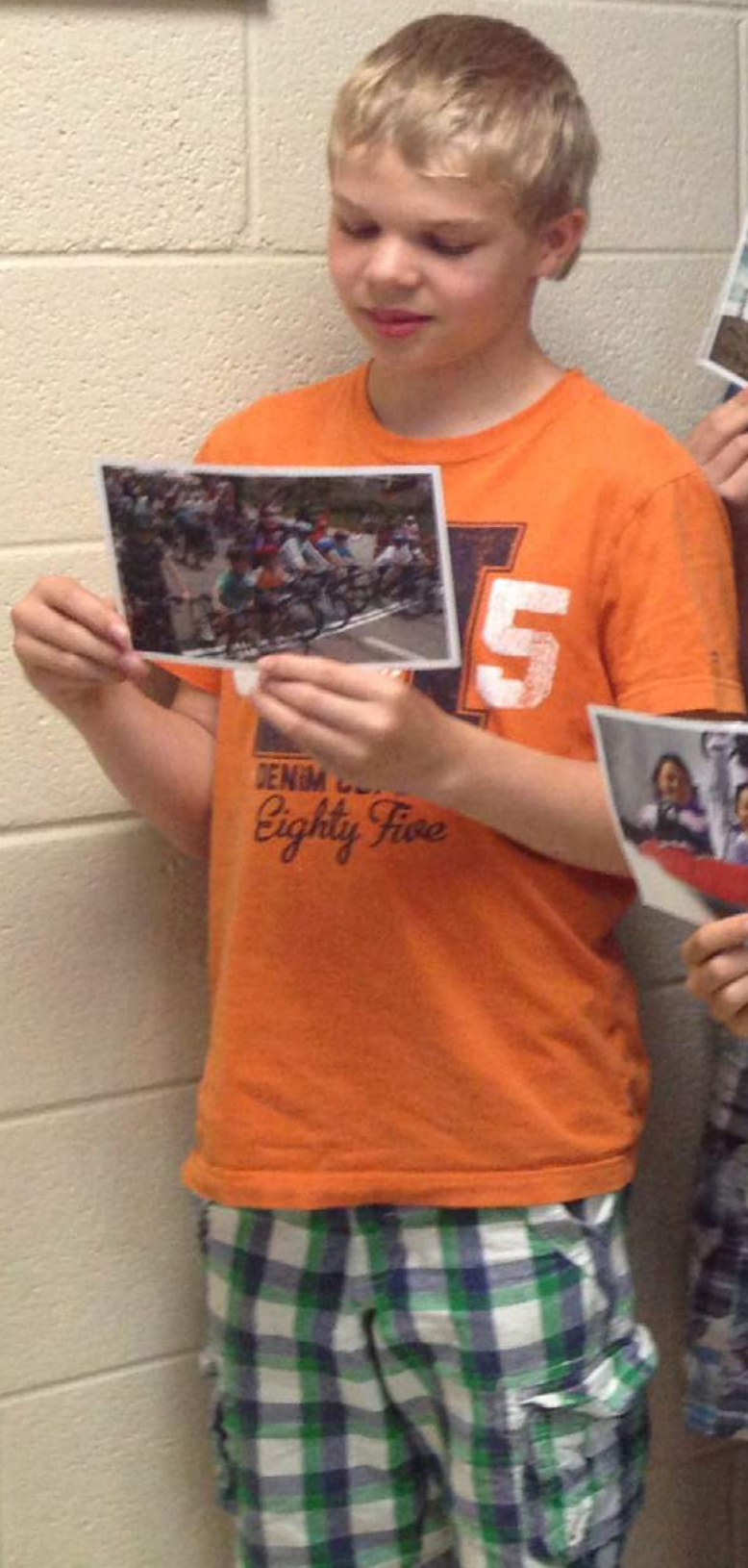


## WATERWORK PARK SURVEY RESULTS



## WATERWORK PARK SURVEY RESULTS









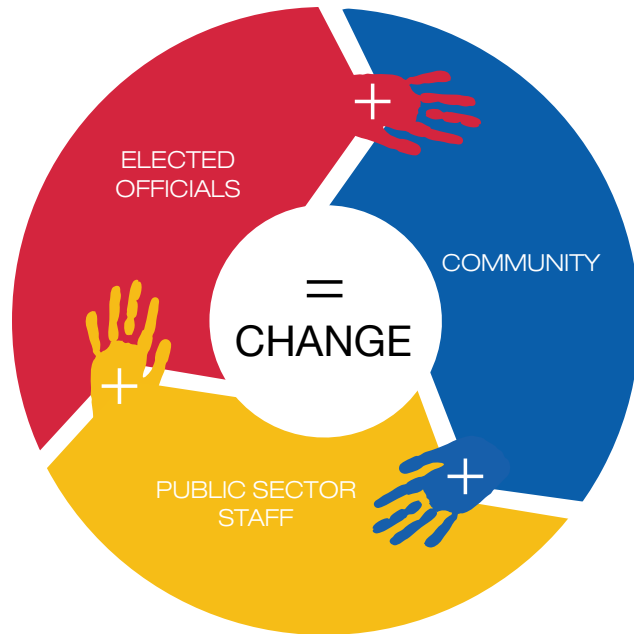
03

Community Engagement



# WHY BOTHER WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement is time consuming and sometimes challenging. However, engaging people in the early stages of a project will always result in better public spaces and neighbourhoods. The community can help to define priorities, talk through challenges, brainstorm solutions, and negotiate with each other about specific ideas. But community engagement is about much more than coming up with a good design. The simple act of being engaged---having someone ask your opinion, or discussing a community issue with your neighbours---helps to raise people's level of interest in community projects and builds a sense of neighbourhood pride and belonging.<sup>17</sup>



## COLLECTIVELY BUILDING A SENSE OF PLACE

The benefits of creating a vibrant and accessible public realm help highlight the reasons why all residents should be encouraged to participate in shaping these spaces. Parks and open spaces should be the heart of a city. They can be gathering places for friends and family, destinations for a variety of activities, and can inspire a sense of mutual ownership and responsibility for them. They can be used by community members for diverse reasons. Most importantly, they can be supported by cooperation between a city and a community. The public realm contributes to both the physical and cultural beauty of North St. Thomas.

Parks, public spaces, streets, and sidewalks are the verandas of city life. They are where we live amongst each other. They are where we experience our cities. It is our public spaces that make our cities more than just a collection of buildings and spaces in between them — they make them places. Even if one lives in the tiniest apartment or the most dilapidated house, everyone's quality of life is impacted when a city has great parks to serve as front yards and public spaces as living rooms. The public realm must be built to address the needs of North St. Thomas residents, so the process of designing and programming parks, public spaces, streets, and sidewalks must be done collectively. This is why an inclusive community engagement process is so important.

# GROUPS ENGAGED

“We need stronger cycling connections between destinations in North St. Thomas.”

“We love this area. The people are very friendly. It's home and we plan to stay.”

“People don't take ownership of the community like they used to.”

## Elected Officials

MPP Jeff Yurek  
Former Minister and MPP Steve Peters  
Lori Baldwin-Sands

## City Managers

Planning Department  
Parks and Recreation

## Resident Groups

Older Adult Focus Group  
Local Business Owners  
St. Thomas Community Gardens

## Social Services

Community Living Elgin  
Elgin St. Thomas Public Health  
Ontario Early Years Centre  
Focus Fairview Community Centre  
Family & Children's Services of  
St. Thomas and Elgin County  
Central Community Health Centre  
Merrymount - All Kids Belong

## Arts and Recreation

St. Thomas Public Library  
Kettle Creek Conservation Authority  
Horton Farmers' Market  
St. Thomas Disc Sports Club  
Studio Arts  
Railway City Tourism

## Local Schools

Monsignor Morrison Students/  
Teachers/Staff  
Locke's Public School Students/  
Teachers/Staff  
Monsignor Morrison Parents Association  
Locke's Public School Parents Association



# ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

During the period between February to June, 2014, 8-80 Cities staff hosted a series of public engagement sessions in North St. Thomas, including stakeholder interviews, surveys, focus groups, and open house meetings. During these sessions, more than 200 individuals who live, work, and/or play in North St. Thomas participated in the Doable Neighbourhood Project process. The engagement sessions were supplemented with site visits, during which 8-80 Cities staff carried out observational exercises and analysis to gauge the level of safety, activity, and vibrancy of St. Thomas' streets, sidewalks, parks, and public spaces.

## Site Visits

The 8-80 Cities team conducted extensive site visits and photo research in North St. Thomas. This stage of the project occurred over the course of two site visits, which were two days in duration. Each visit included trips to important neighbourhood landmarks, walking and/or cycling tours of the neighbourhood. The purpose of these visits was to increase our understanding of the community context, strengths, weaknesses and challenges. As a result, we were better equipped to relate to, communicate with, and understand community members during engagement stage.

## Focus Groups

8-80 Cities uses focus groups as a form of qualitative research in order to gain an understanding of people's perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards the neighbourhood and more generally, how they travel around their community. Focus groups tend to be the most effective way to engage vulnerable or difficult to engage groups. Focus groups can be conducted almost anywhere that makes the participants feel comfortable, and that is conducive to group conversation. Whenever possible 8-80 Cities will conduct a portion of

the focus group in the neighbourhood (i.e. neighbourhood walkabouts, in parks and open spaces etc). Trained in group facilitation, we will develop an interactive group session where participants are encouraged to talk openly and with other participants. 8-80 Cities will use a range of engagement activities (i.e. semi-structured questions, videos, surveys, mapping activities) to draw out ideas and options from the group.

## Semi-Structured Interviews

8-80 Cities uses semi-structured interviews as a form of qualitative research in order to gain insight on people's perceptions, opinions and attitude towards specific issues in their community. Semi-structured interviews are usually used to engage key-stakeholders (i.e. community leaders, elected officials, business leaders and potential pilot project "champions"). 8-80 Cities will develop a framework for the interview around themes to be explored and provide a flexible framework for the interview which allows new questions and topics to be brought up during the session.





## Presentations & Community Workshops

At 8-80 Cities we know that citizens hold the greatest expertise when it comes to the communities where they live, work and play. We use an interactive and hands-on approach to educate people on the key elements of healthy neighbourhood design, people-oriented cities and public space. Our aim is to equip participants with knowledge essential to understanding the elements of healthy communities, quality public space, international best practices, and specific programs and initiatives that can be adapted to their own community. We will use educational presentations, inspiring images and videos, and interactive activities to encourage creative approaches to community building. We will also discuss the varied challenges cities face when implementing new programs and policies and offer solutions on how to overcome them.

### Capacity Building Workshops

Capacity Building Workshops serve to educate residents about the importance of creating walkable, bikeable, and park-friendly communities. Using inspiring case studies and engaging presentations these workshops build knowledge and capacity on the benefits and importance of the public realm. Through interactive exercises, residents are able to identify barriers and opportunities for walking, cycling, and accessing public space in the community. The workshops also serve as a forum for open debate and dialogue among the different stakeholders.



# ACTIVITIES

The most productive community engagement processes are fun and accessible. During all consultation sessions, 8-80 Cities uses a series of interactive and engaging activities to solicit valuable information in an inclusive and inviting atmosphere. Some of the activities used in North St. Thomas include the following:

## Postcard from the Future

This simple activity can be used to help people dream big. By asking people to imagine the space 10 years in future, they can free themselves from concerns related to budget, politics, and logistics and get to the essence of what they want the place to become. Participants write a postcard to someone (a friend, the Mayor, a City Councillor) and describe what they see, smell, hear, or feel in that future public space.

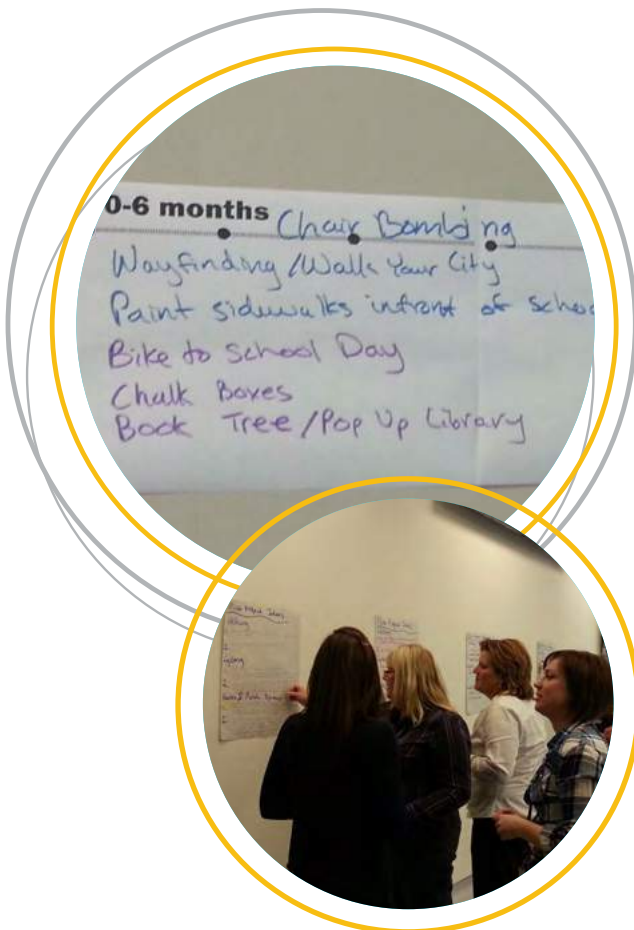
## Surveys

8-80 Cities distributed short surveys to North St. Thomas residents, in both a printed copy and an online survey. Nearly 50 completed surveys were collected between April-July, 2014. The first half of the surveys are designed to determine residents' current behaviour in regards to walking, cycling, and visiting local parks and public spaces. The surveys conclude by asking participants to identify key variables that would encourage them to walk, bike, and visit local parks more often.



## Community Mapping

Together in groups of 3-5, workshop participants plot community assets and areas for improvement with coloured sticker dots on a large area map. Participants are also asked to write their comments on walking, cycling, and public spaces directly onto the map (ie. “The trees on this block make it a great street to walk along”). This activity was used as an introduction to the interactive portion of the DNP workshops. By identifying specific strengths and weaknesses, Community Mapping inspires participants to imagine what assets (parks, community centres, streets, trails, etc.) can be built on, and which areas need special attention and improvement.



## Pilot Project Brainstorming

The rules of this activity are limited only by a participant's imagination. This is a brainstorming exercise that helps workshop participants imagine which pilot projects could build on the existing strengths and weaknesses identified in the Community Mapping activity. Participants sift through dozens of inspirational images of best walking, cycling, and public space practices from around the world. Ideas that emerged as a result of this activity included both hardware and software pilot projects such as, chair bombing, interactive public art, bike rodeos, and neighbourhood walking tours.

## Dotmocracy

All workshop participants vote for their favourite pilot projects that each team developed through the Pilot Project Brainstorming exercise. The winning project from each team will be used in the next activity.

## Action Planning

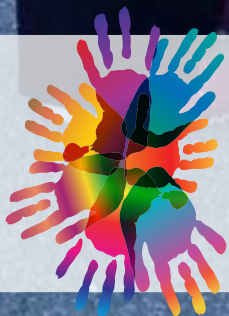
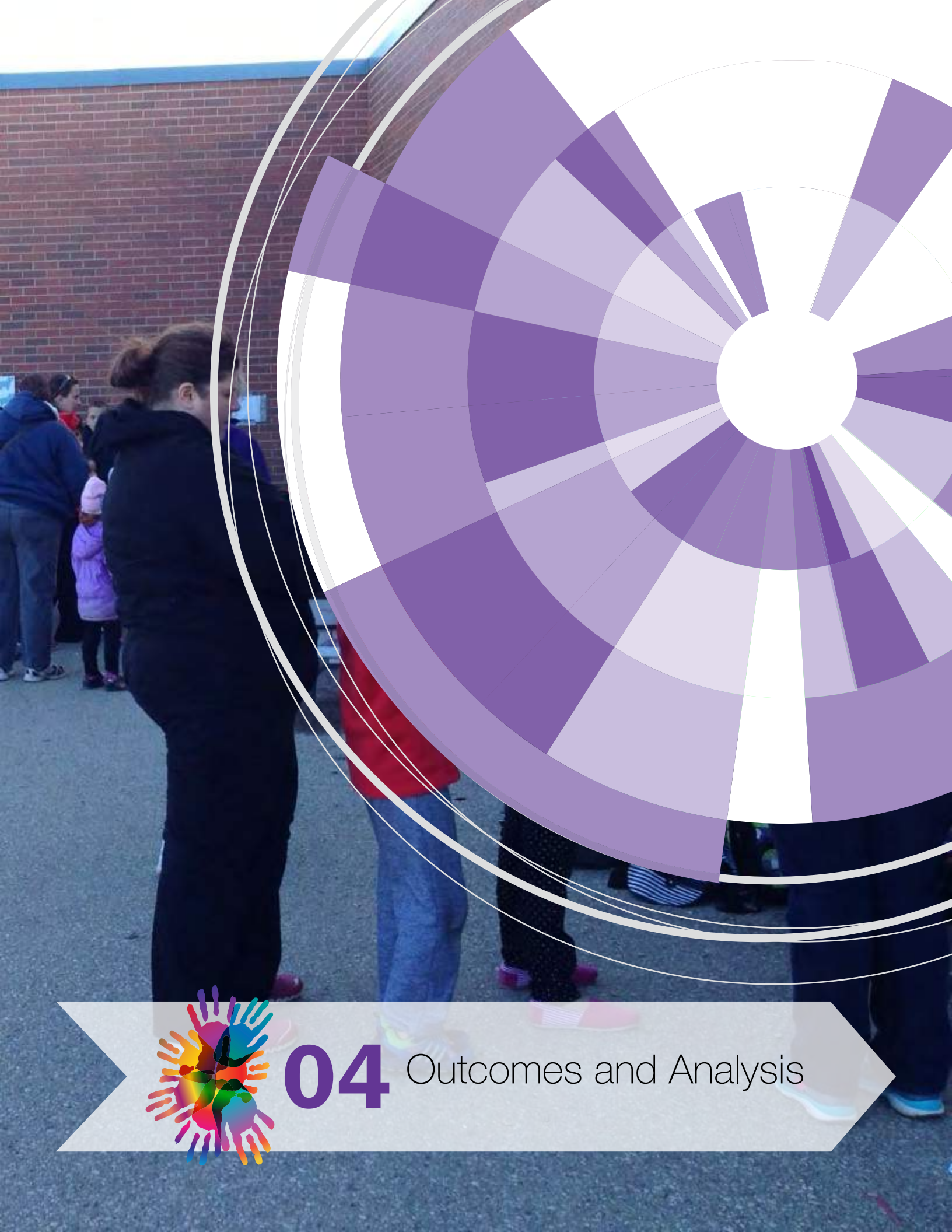
Participants develop an action and implementation plan for bringing their pilot project ideas into reality. Large worksheets provided in this exercise help guide teams through the essential elements of their pilot project, including the what, when, who, where, why, and most importantly, how.











**04**

Outcomes and Analysis

Using a public engagement feedback matrix, 8-80 Cities staff compiled, categorized, and ranked every idea collected during the public consultation phase. The ideas were gathered over the course of four months, during which more than 200 residents participated in engagement sessions. Over 300 ideas for making North St. Thomas a more walkable, bikeable, happy and healthy, people-based place, were collected. The ideas were first divided into two broad categories: Software and Hardware (Figure 1). Software refers to project ideas that involve events, programming and public space management. Hardware project ideas include investment in physical infrastructure in the public realm.

Project ideas were then categorized into five major Doable Project Themes. The number of times each theme was discussed by residents at an 8-80 Cities consultation meeting is represented in Figure 2. As demonstrated below, the ideas discussed by North St. Thomas residents most commonly fell under the Parks & Public Spaces, Walking & Cycling, and Arts, Culture, Sociability themes.

### Sociability

The underlying message in each major theme is the desire for residents to have more opportunities to interact and come together. Many people noted that the greatest asset that North St. Thomas has are the residents themselves. Therefore, whichever projects are chosen from this document should reflect the need to enhance social opportunities and personal connections.

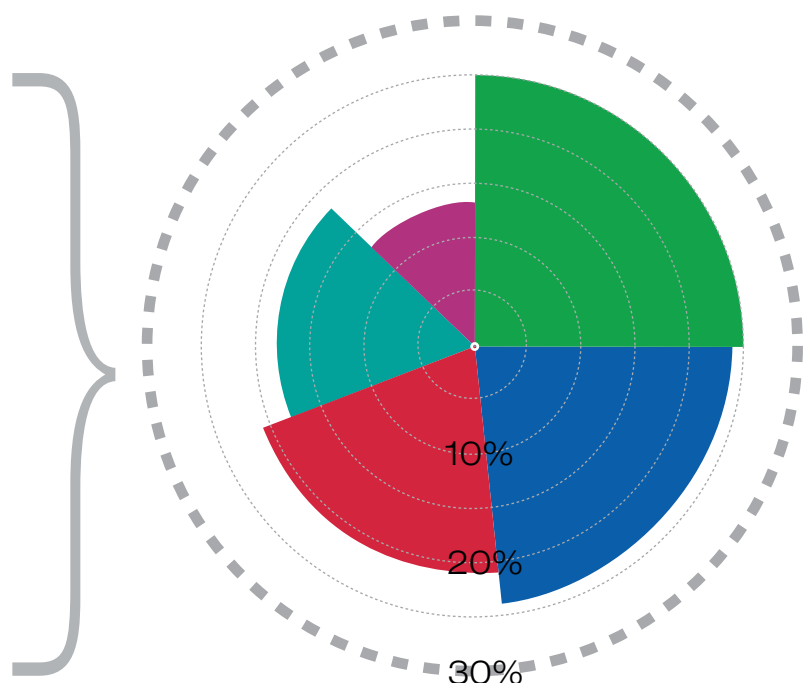
Parks & Public Spaces (25%)

Walking & Cycling (24%)

Arts, Culture, Sociability (21%)

Retail & Amenities (18%)

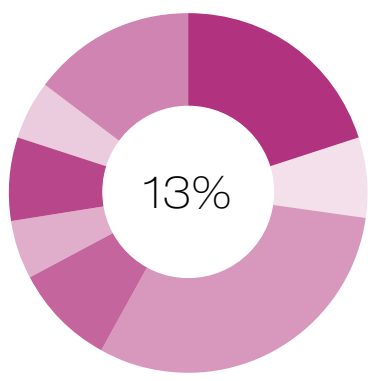
Streets & Sidewalks (13%)



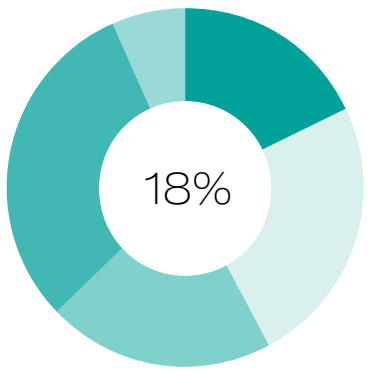
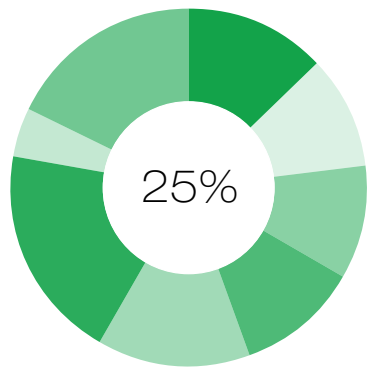




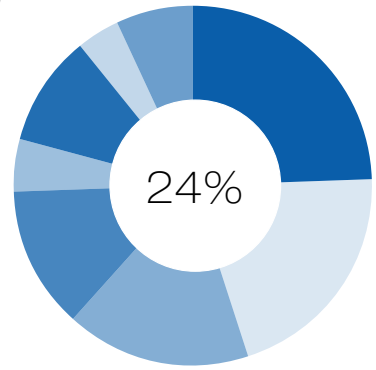
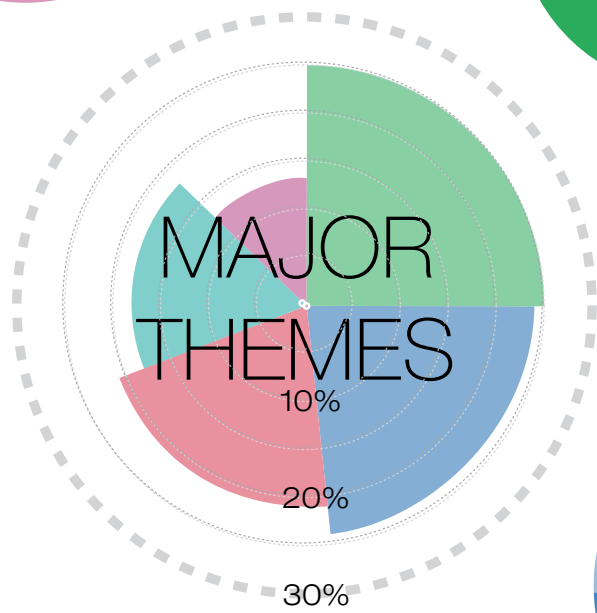
STREETS  
&  
SIDEWALKS



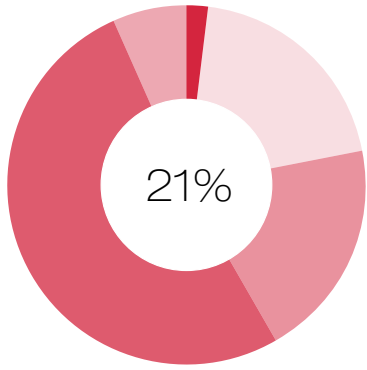
PARKS  
&  
PUBLIC SPACE



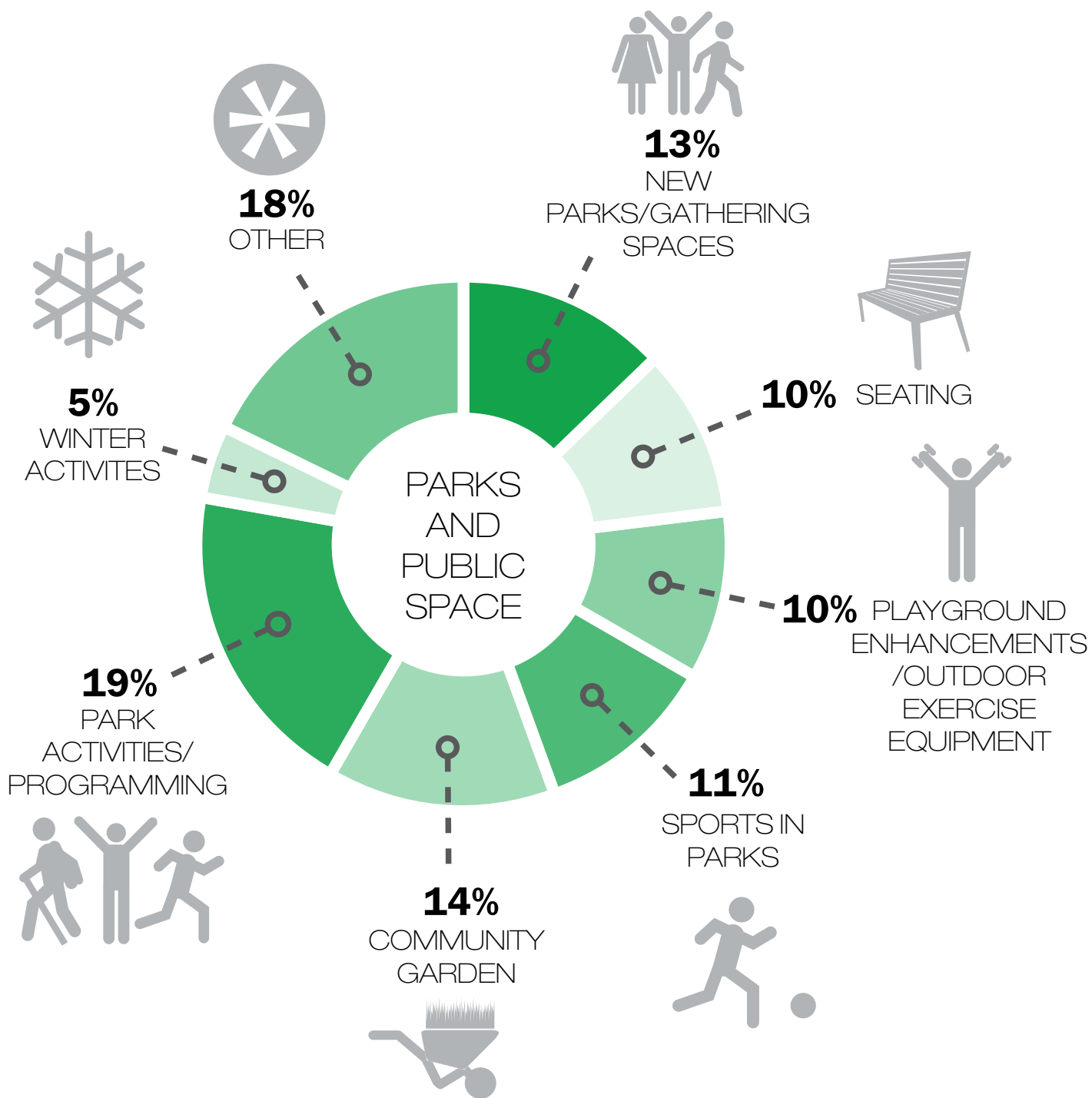
RETAIL/  
AMENITIES



WALKING  
&  
CYCLING



ARTS,  
CULTURE &  
RECREATION



# PARKS & PUBLIC SPACES

Parks and public spaces are vital to the social and cultural life of a neighbourhood. North St. Thomas has several public space assets, with the crown jewel being Waterworks Park and the Dalewood Reservoir. With the infrastructure already in place, the primary challenge lies in programming these spaces with events and activities that will draw people in, and encourage them to stay.

The top two Doable Project ideas under the Parks & Public Spaces theme are:

## Parks Programming/Activities (19% of category ideas):

North St. Thomas residents enjoy their neighbourhood parks, but feel strongly that these spaces could be greatly improved through regular programming. Students and young families want to see more activities for children such as picnics, fishing derbies, kite days, bouncy castles, and family-oriented events. Ideas that could appeal to a broader demographic include paddleboat and kayak rentals at Waterworks and musical performances at local parks.

## Community Gardens (14% of category ideas):

Building on the demand for more programming in local parks, many residents suggested that smaller green spaces be used for community gardens. Small green spaces along Confederation Drive, Kin Park, Woodhaven Park, and the field between the two schools were all suggested as potential locations. Community gardens would bring multiple benefits to the neighbourhood by increasing access to fresh produce, by boosting education and awareness of healthy eating, and by providing new opportunities for social interaction among neighbours.

## Other Parks & Public Space Ideas:

\*percentages represent the number of times each idea was raised during a consultation session (see pie chart)

## New Parks/Gathering Spaces (13%)\*

build a pavilion for family picnics, create a new meeting area in the housing complexes, activate the green space between the schools

**Sports in Parks (11%):** basketball and volleyball nets, disc golf nets in smaller parks, soccer field in Kin Park, outdoor hockey rink in parks

**Park Seating (10%):** chair bombing in Woodhaven, more seating for grandparents who take children to parks, more benches in Kin, benches in Dalewood Trail, chairs between the school

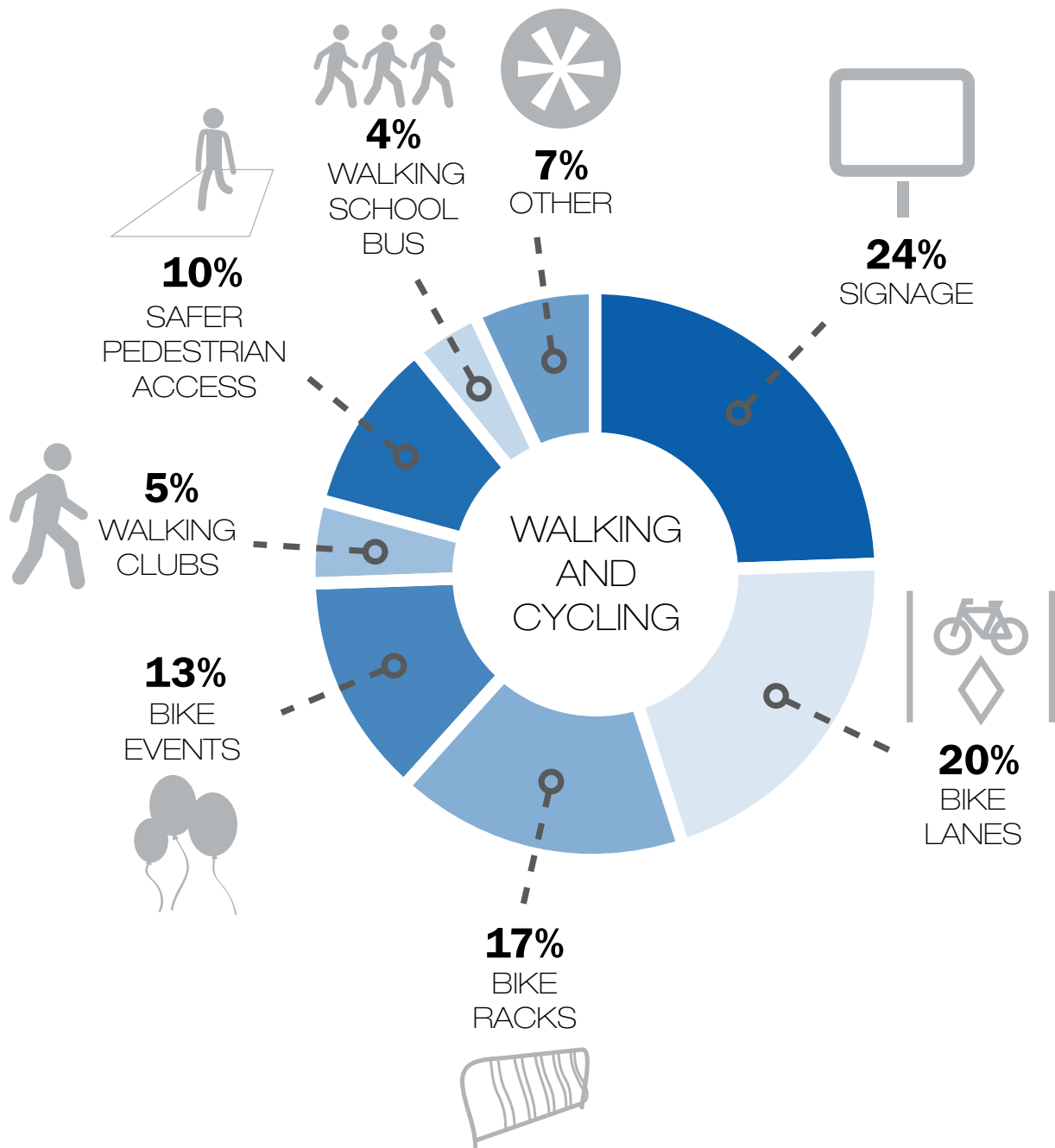
**Playground Enhancements (10%):** exercise equipment along Waterworks trails, outdoor public gym in Kin Park, park swings for younger children, skate park in Waterworks, washrooms and vending machines

**Winter Activities (5%):** use schools after hours for winter programming, place free toboggans in Waterworks Park, build an outdoor ice hockey rink

**Other (18%):** enhance walkways from housing complexes to Kin Park, emergency phone in Waterworks, local shops run community watch program, memorial for large weeping willow tree, trail markers on Dalewood Trail, lights on Dalewood Trail







# WALKING & CYCLING

North St. Thomas is a highly walkable and bikeable community due to its consistent grid pattern and the relative proximity of major destinations such as the schools, Tim Horton's, and Waterworks Park. Building on this foundation will be vital to creating a truly walk and bike friendly town. 8-80 Cities staff learned that many people already walk in North St. Thomas, but there remains room for improvement to boost walking trips made for utilitarian rather than recreational purposes. Cycling, on the other hand, is not perceived to be a safe or viable option for many reasons, including safety and lack of infrastructure.

The top two Doable Project categories under this theme help address these key issues:

## Signage (24% of category ideas):

As a small neighbourhood, most residents already know how to get to and from most places in North St. Thomas. However, many people do not know how long it might take to travel by non-motorized transportation. Creative wayfinding signage based off of the Walk Your City website concept would help boost the profile of destinations, while encouraging people to walk or bike throughout town. Improved signage could establish access points to Waterworks Park and Dalewood Reservoir trails, or be used to mark safe biking and walking routes.

## Bike Lanes (20% of category ideas):

A network of connected bike lanes would have a significant and immediate impact on cycling behaviours in North St. Thomas. The current bike lane on South Edgeware Road terminates unexpectedly, and does not connect to important destinations, such as the schools. A simple grid of lanes on residential streets could provide alternative routes for cyclists wishing to bypass faster traffic on South Edgeware

Road. For maximum impact, the lanes should be separated from traffic with plastic bollards. Temporary bike lanes demarcated with orange pylons could be used to demonstrate demand and experiment with routes.

## Other Walking & Cycling Ideas:

\*percentages represent the number of times each idea was raised during a consultation session (see pie chart)

**Bike Racks (17%):** install visible and accessible bike racks at important destinations

**Bike Events (13%):** raise awareness and popularity of cycling as a means of transportation through bike rodeos, free public tune ups, community bike rides

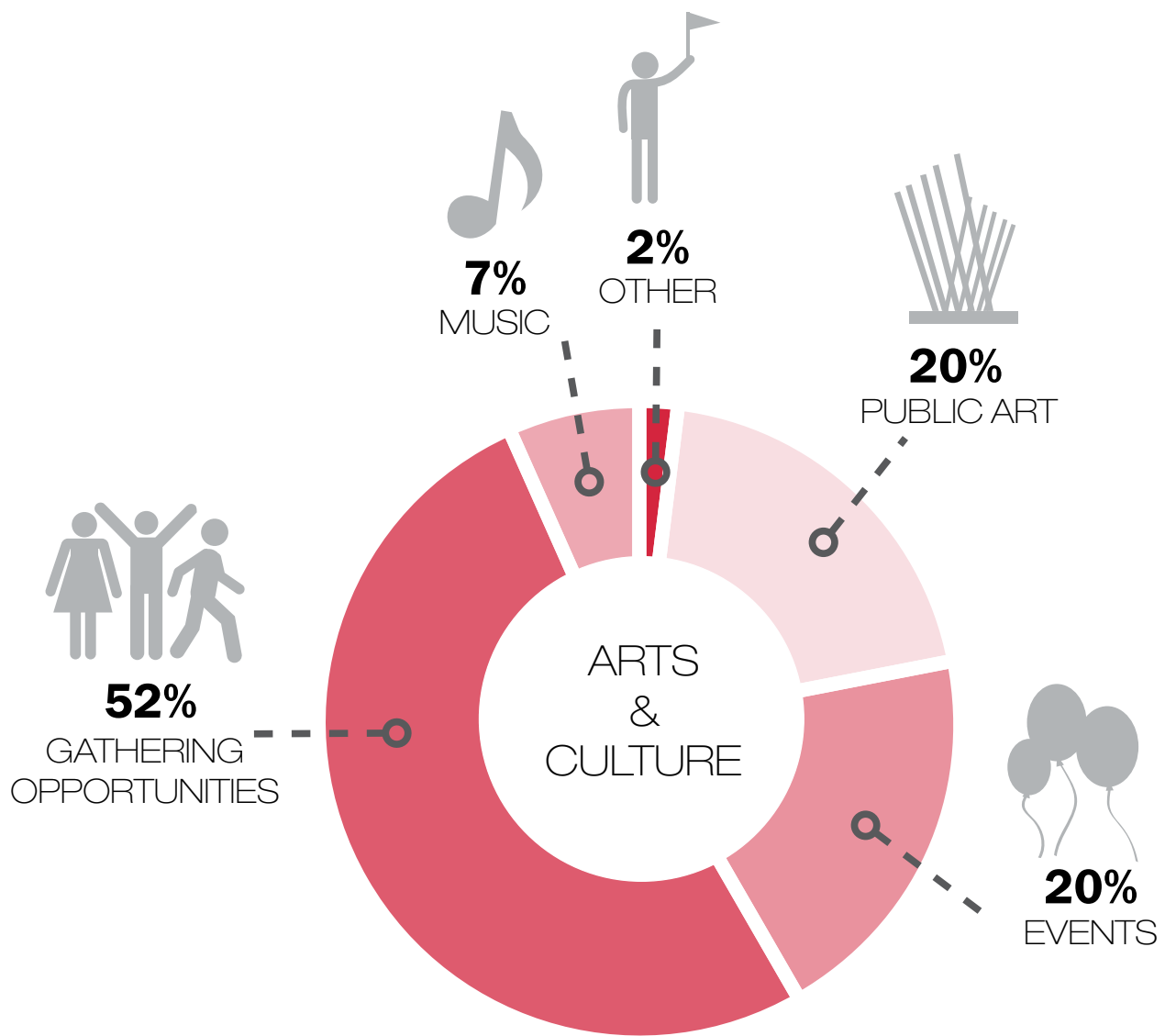
**Safe Pedestrian Routes to Waterworks (10%):** use signage and new walking trails to make it safer for people to access Waterworks Park, particularly down the South Edgeware Road hill.

**Walking Clubs (5%):** establish clubs for older adults and younger people to enhance social interaction and to encourage people to become more active

**Walking School Bus (4%):** work with the local schools to create a program that will enhance the safety of walking to school for young children

**Other (9%):** more hiking trails, walking trails to Kin Park, Open Streets, Park the Car and Get Movin' campaign, fleet of cargo bikes for community use







# ARTS, CULTURE & SOCIABILITY



Residents frequently addressed the need to establish a sense of place and break down social barriers in the neighbourhood. Establishing a hub for arts and culture, and hosting more opportunities for neighbours to meet in public spaces were commonly mentioned as a strategy to achieve this goal. The most common Doable Project Ideas under the Arts & Culture category include:

## Gathering Opportunities (52% of category ideas)

North St. Thomas residents are enthusiastic about opportunities to create new parks and public spaces throughout the neighbourhood. Doable project ideas such as Park(ing) Day and the creation of small parkettes were very popular among consultation participants. Most importantly, North St. Thomas residents want a community centre where they can drop in, bring their kids, meet their neighbours, and access affordable services and recreational programs. Smaller-scale suggested included installing Muskoka Chairs outside of Al's Pizza, organizing a volunteer day camp, hosting community cooking classes, or partnering with Studio Arts for free dance/yoga classes.

## Public Events (20% of category ideas)

When asked, what would you like to see more of in North St. Thomas? consultation participants frequently demanded more community events and festivals. Many residents made recommendations to enhance existing events or offered their own ideas for entirely new events that would bring people together to celebrate North St. Thomas' outdoor

assets. Suggested themes for public events included, community barbeques at the housing complexes, street yard sale, community disc golf tournament, kite day, Open Streets, Kids Market Day, neighbourhood scavenger hunt, park(ing) day, bike to school day, and a ball hockey tournament on the street.

## Public Art (20% of category ideas)

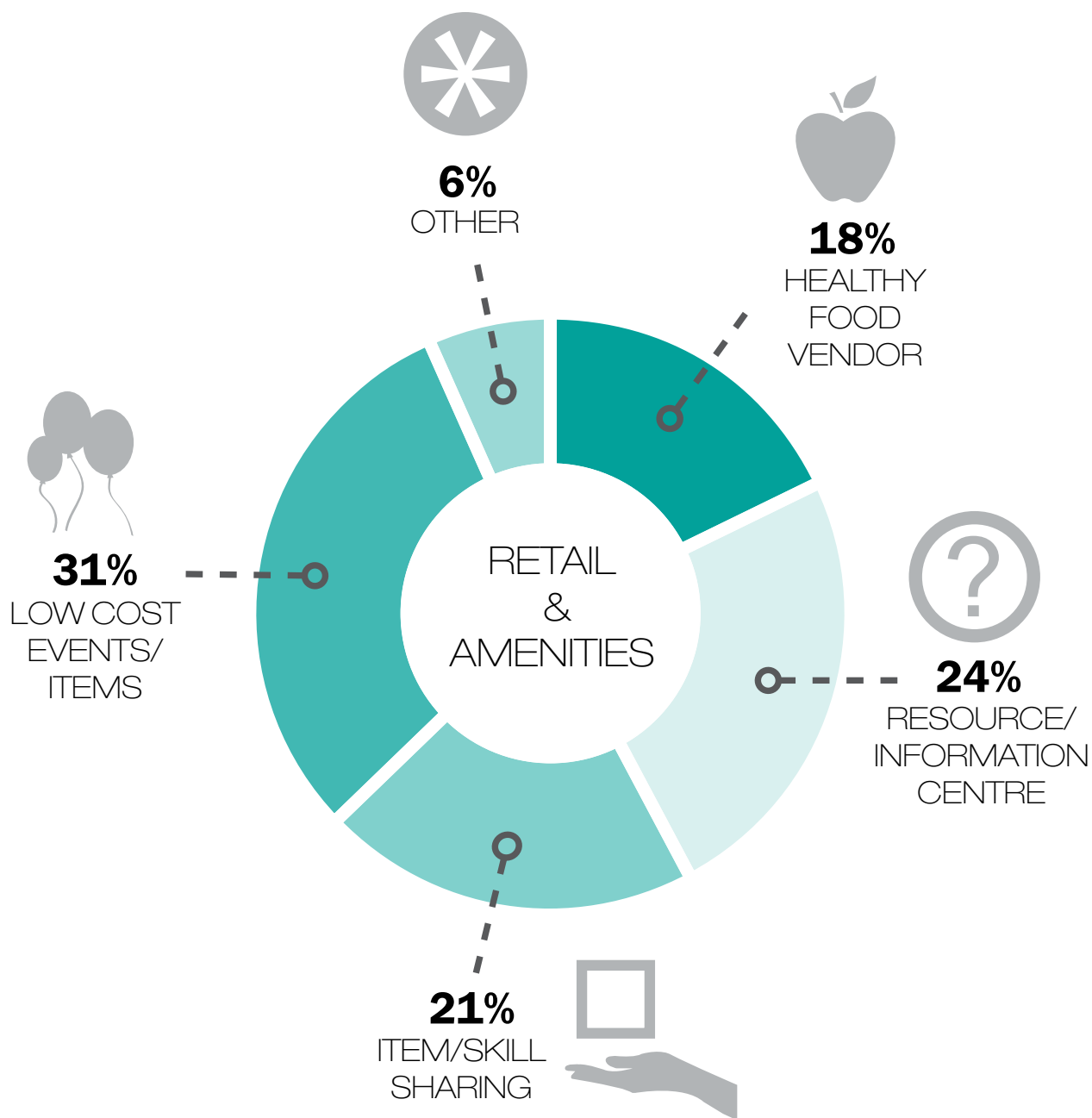
Public art has the ability to infuse colour and variety, while unifying an area with a common theme or identity. At a pedestrian scale, art can provide visual interest and foster a sense of pride in local residents. Successful public artwork installations generally involve the engagement of community stakeholders and local business owners. Many consultation participants wanted to see more public art, creativity, and colour spread throughout the streets and public spaces of North St. Thomas. Interactive art installations, design competitions, graffiti walls, colourful gateways into the community, and sidewalk murals were all listed as potential strategies.

## Other Arts & Culture ideas:

\*percentages represent the number of times each idea was raised during a consultation session (see pie chart)

**Music (7%):** invite local buskers to perform on streets, impromptu concerts in parks and public spaces, pop-up pianos, musical instrument repair café, Music Together Program in public spaces coordinated by Studio arts, host spontaneous open mic events for children

**Community Tours (2%):** guided tours to educate the public and celebrate local culture (themes: garden, heritage, history, walking tour)





North St. Thomas residents were full of creative and impactful ideas that could transform the neighbourhood into a better place for walking, cycling, and visiting parks and public spaces. The ideas in this category do not fit under one major theme, but would have positive effects on all of the DNP objectives. The light infrastructure and programming projects included in this category are also not isolated to any geographic area (ie. Parks and Public Spaces or Streets and Sidewalks), but could be applied anywhere and everywhere people gather in North St. Thomas.

## Low Cost Events & Services (31% of category ideas):

For many North St. Thomas residents, covering the basic costs of living can be an economic strain. The theme of affordability arose during several community consultation meetings, and was particularly notable among families with young children. The costs of essentials like food, shelter, and transportation often means there is little money to spare for youth recreational programs. Several residents called for more low cost or free public events, subsidized daycare programs, and free or discounted taxi services to address the inadequate public transportation in the neighbourhood.

## Resource/Info Centre (24% of category ideas):

Multiple social service and cultural agencies serve the North St. Thomas neighbourhood, but the lack of a single resource centre was noted by many residents. A community resource hub would increase neighbourly interaction and reduce social isolation, while boosting the accessibility of social services. Suggested programming for a resource centre included: cooking classes, tea time, movie nights, mom and tots crafts, after school crafts, skill share program, community meeting spaces, and

establishing a community newspaper. The need for a 'hang-out' place was especially salient among younger residents. Residents also demanded improved, coordinated efforts to inform the community about upcoming events and social opportunities. A community resource centre could also provide much needed space for a centralized information hub.

## Other Neighbourhood-wide Amenities and Economy Ideas:

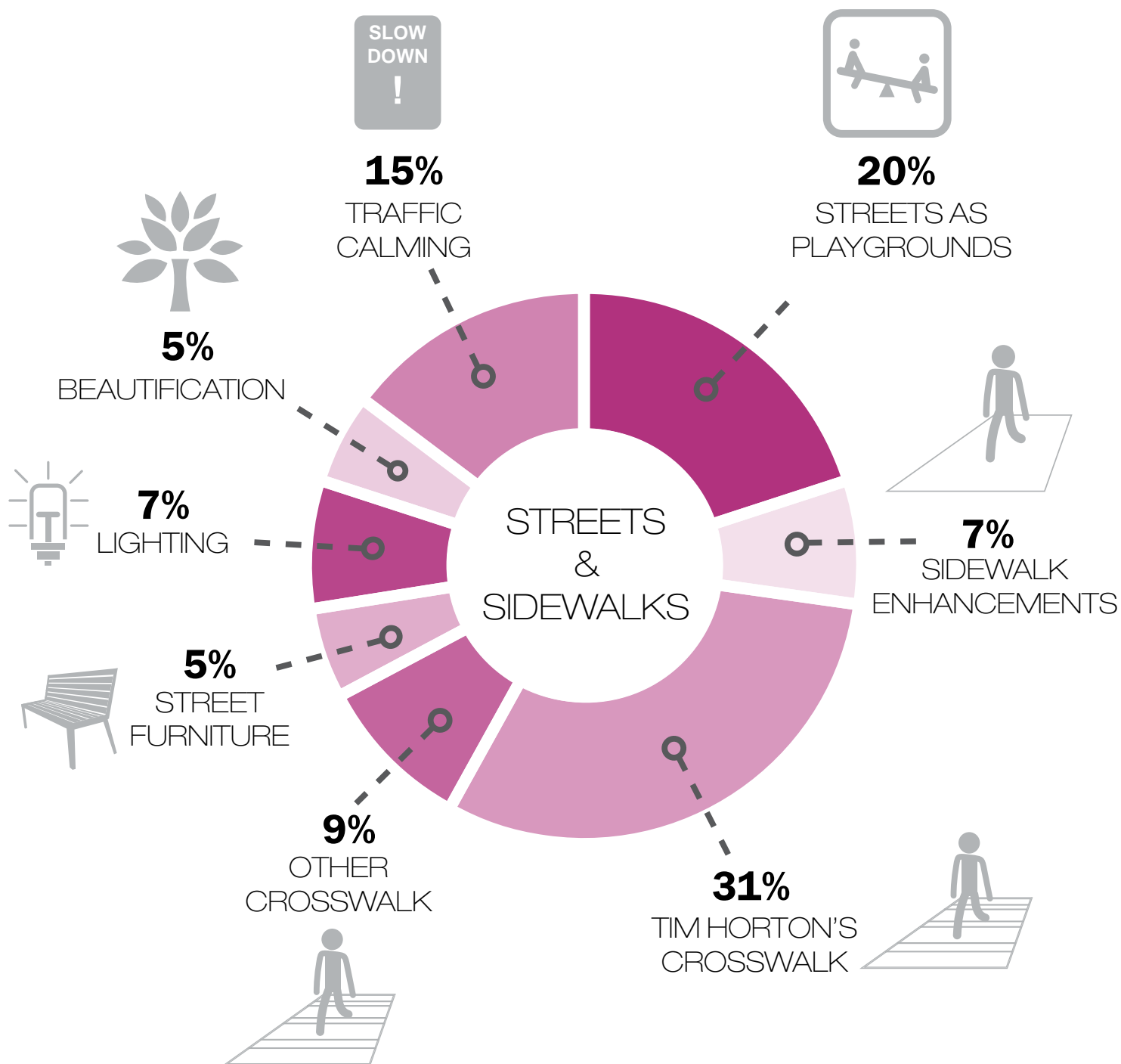
\*percentages represent the number of times each idea was raised during a consultation session (see pie chart)

**Item/Skill Sharing (21%):** establish programs that allow residents to swap unused household items (clothing swap, pop-up library, community tool shed, toy library, bike swap). Residents also want to see skill share programs that allow people to teach one another simple skills such as bike repairs, musical instrument repairs, and knitting.

**Healthy Food Vendor (18%):** address the food desert problem by working with the local health unit, community agencies, and local businesses/farmers to bring fresh affordable food directly to low income areas. Suggested ideas included: good food box, healthy snack wagon, partner with Waterworks Variety & Video to create a healthy corner store, vegetable stand in green space between schools, free gift certificates for the farmers market, and pop-up produce stand.

**Other (6%):** people want to see more social and lifestyle-based restaurants such as a local breakfast diner, coffee shops (Starbucks), and ice cream trucks. These do not present doable project opportunities, but pop-up shops and retail could be explored.





# STREETS & SIDEWALKS

Streets and roads represent the largest public space in every city. They are often designed, however, with one user in mind; the motorist. Creating better streets and roads that accommodate all transportation modes is essential to building a safer and healthier community for everyone. Participants acknowledged the need to reclaim the streets, laneways, parking spaces, and sidewalks for people of all ages and mobility levels. A variety of ideas emerged that could help enhance the cyclist and pedestrian experience without the expense associated with major infrastructure projects.

The two key Doable Project categories that came out of discussions regarding streets and roadways are:

## Tim Hortons Crosswalk (31% of category ideas)

Public consultations and site visit observations reveal that the Tim Hortons on South Edgeware is one of the most common crossing points for pedestrians. The nearest crosswalk to the restaurant is located at Burwell Road, approximately 400 metres east of the restaurant. As a consequence, the installation of a highly visible (possibly colourful) crosswalk to allow pedestrians travelling to and from Tim Hortons was among the most popular ideas for consultation participants.

## Streets as Playgrounds (20% of category ideas):

North St. Thomas is a relatively young community, as evidenced by the two schools located within the DNP boundaries. Introducing a sense of play and whimsy into the public realm will address the needs of this large demographic. As a concept, streets as playgrounds would help animate

the public spaces inbetween the parks in North St. Thomas by making them feel safe and inviting. Inexpensive but creative ideas such as permanent hopscotch and sidewalk swings were supported among students and young families.

## Other Streets & Sidewalks ideas:

\*percentages represent the number of times each idea was raised during a consultation session (see pie chart)

**Traffic Calming (15%)\*** reduce speed limits, install community zone signage, and 'share the road' signage for cyclists

**Other Crosswalks (9%):** install crosswalks in areas other than the Tim Hortons on South Edgeware. Other strategic locations include the schools and across from Kin and Woodhaven Parks

**Sidewalk Enhancements (7%):** work with the city to improve sidewalk maintenance, remove cracks and other barriers that limit pedestrian accessibility and safety

**Lighting (7%):** enhance lighting along the roads and in parks to increase real and perceived levels of safety throughout the neighbourhood

**Street Furniture (5%):** invest in accessible benches and moveable chairs for people to rest in the streets and public places

**Beautification (5%):** enhance the streetscape by installing more street trees, public art and overhanging planters along streets and sidewalks











**05**

Implementation

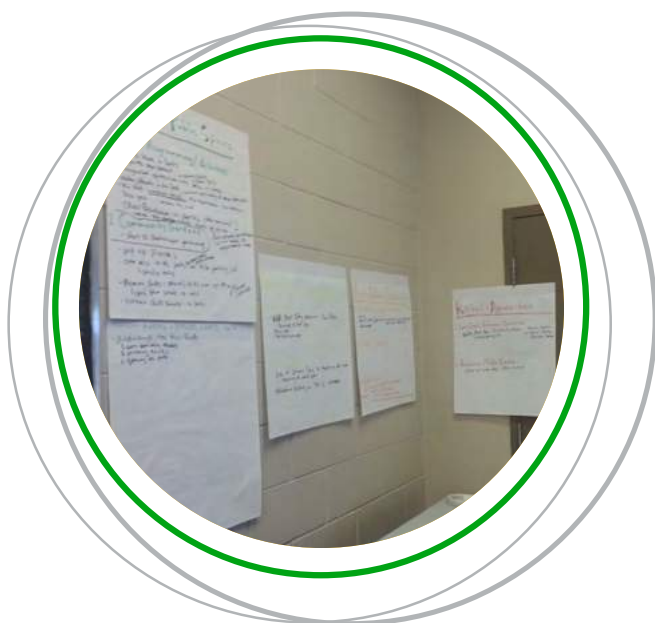
# SELECTING THE PILOT PROJECTS

North St. Thomas residents shared dozens of inspiring and innovative ideas during the DNP community engagement process. The ideas ranged from the practical and implementable (ie. more benches throughout town) to the creative and aspirational (ie. build scenic lookout towers). 8-80 Cities distilled these ideas into major categories and themes (as seen in the previous section), but the DNP Committee is responsible for selecting which concepts and pilot projects to move forward with. To support this selection process, 8-80 Cities developed a tool that ranked each pilot project idea based its popularity during public engagement, and also placed each idea on a timeline and spectrum of doability. This process helped the Committee identify which projects could be implemented as quick-wins, and which ideas would have the greatest impact over a longer period of time. Through a series of meetings, 8-80 Cities also identified which residents had volunteered to help implement specific projects during the public engagement sessions.

As a result of this rigorous process, two pilot projects rolled out in the spring/summer of 2014. Several more projects are in various planning stages, and are scheduled to be unveiled in 2015.

## North St Thomas Block Party

The North St Thomas Block Party marked the official launch of the Doable Neighbourhood Project in St. Thomas. More importantly, this event helped break down the sense of social and physical isolation experienced by many families living in the neighbourhood's public housing units. The Block Party included games for kids, free food, live entertainment, and local health service providers offered basic advice and check-ups. 8-80 Cities staff engaged participants and gathered valuable information that ultimately informed future pilot projects in the area. This event highlighted the fact that community-focused programming can have profound impacts on bringing neighbours together and getting people active.





### North St. Thomas Wayfinding Signage

According to new signage, it's only a seven minute walk from Kin Park to the local coffee shop in North St. Thomas. The St. Thomas Wayfinding Signage projects directs pedestrians to local destinations such as schools, parks (Waterworks), and other local physical fitness amenities (disc golf course). A lively group of student volunteers from the primary schools installed more than 30 wayfinding signs throughout the neighbourhood in November 2014. This project was inspired by the Walk [Your] City initiative, which has taken place in cities and towns around the world.





## North St. Thomas Ice Rink

The North St. Thomas Ice Rink was a public skating surface adjacent to Monsignor Morrison School. It quickly became a popular neighbourhood destination after launching in January 2015. The Ice Rink received unanimous support from city council after local advocates and students presented the idea at city hall. Construction of the rink was a collaborative project, involving volunteers from the community and the local fire department. A volunteer coordinator and maintenance crew ensured the rink was kept in top repair, and that it's permitted hours of use were respected. The ice rink accomplished the following goals:

- 1) Animate underused public spaces;
- 2) Provide opportunities for winter outdoor physical activity;
- 3) Offer a new community gathering space for 'bump-in' opportunities; and
- 4) Create something special in North St Thomas for the community to be proud of!

## Student Projects:

For the students of Mr. Austin's geography class, building an ice rink in North St. Thomas was a no-brainer. The only decision this Monsignor Morrison grade 7 class had to decide was where the rink should be built. Applying their geographic skills and knowledge, the students surveyed their school yard and the adjacent green spaces to determine the ideal location for the rink. The students then used aerial site maps and plasticine to build 3-D models of the rink in various locations. They were also instructed to weigh the pros and cons of each location (see below). Several models were displayed at St. Thomas City Hall, and two students were inspired to create a video describing the benefits of an ice rink, which was later played during a City Council meeting and

helped win political support for the project. As a result of Mr. Austin's geography assignment, 30 students volunteered to help shovel the approved site and are eager to help maintain the rink once it is built.

## Student Ice Rink Pros:

- Allows school hockey team practice during school hours
- Draws more attention to this side of the city
- More people will want to go to this school
- Nearby houses will be worth more since they are near a school, ice rink and park
- May open new jobs (supervision, take care of the rink)

## Student Ice Rink Cons:

- The rink will always need to be supervised (safety)
- Vandalism to the rink and surrounding buildings
- Costs for construction
- May cause interference with school during construction
- Noise (machinery, people)



# UPCOMING PROJECTS

## North St. Thomas Colourful Crosswalks

South Edgeware Road is a busy arterial that runs east-west through the North St. Thomas neighbourhood. Two schools, dozens of residences, and the neighbourhood's only sit-down restaurant (Tim Hortons) is located on South Edgeware Road. Unfortunately, there is no safe crosswalk for nearly a kilometre stretch of South Edgeware between Burwell Road (east) and First Avenue (west). The community identified a colourful crosswalk as an effective way to improve pedestrian safety by enhancing visibility, slowing traffic, and creating a direct crossing route to the popular Tim Hortons restaurant. The intent is that the design as well as the installation of the crosswalks will be a community event where local artists create the colourful crosswalks design and local residents and students will help paint the crosswalks.

Mid-block stop signs and colourful crosswalks enhance pedestrian safety on South Edware



Gardens in the laneway behind the Neighbourhood Hub animates this underused space



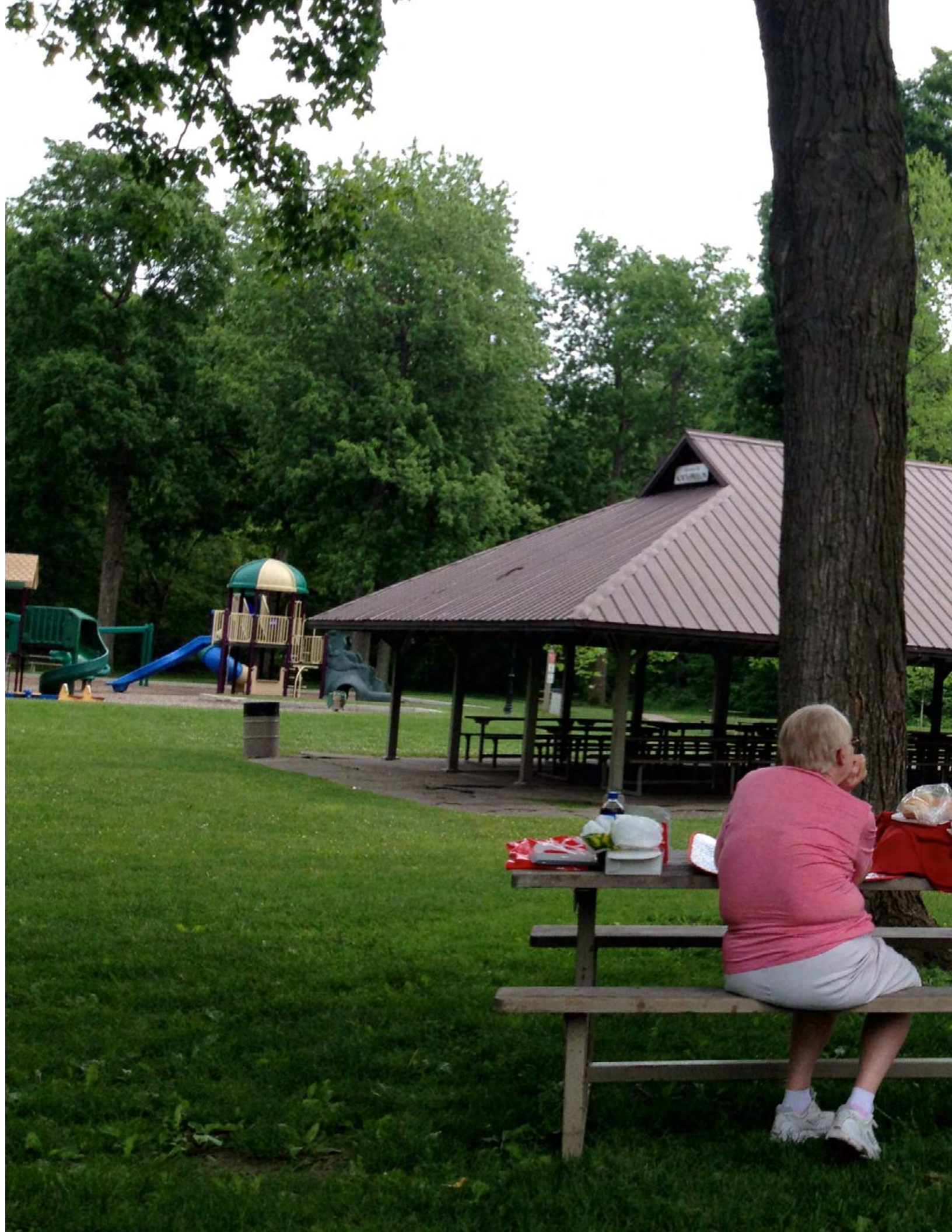
Extending the bike lane on South Edgeware to Waterworks Park creates connectivity



Lights and fresh landscaping would improve walking paths that connect local parks







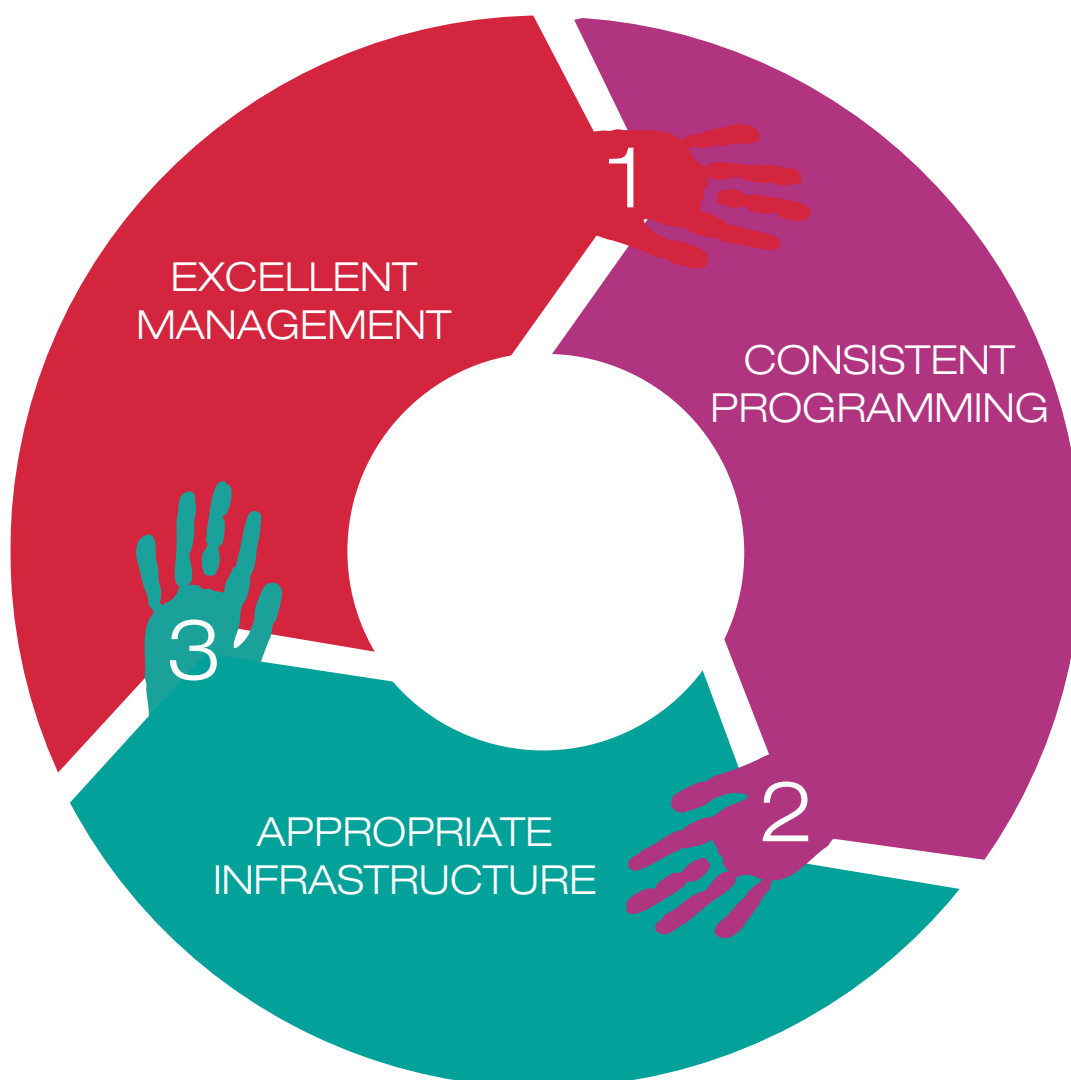
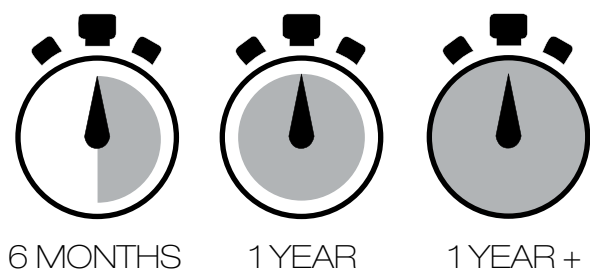




06

Recommendations

8-80 Cities' recommendations for longer term projects as well as ongoing projects and programs...A successful park, public space, neighbourhood, and town is defined by defined by three key elements; excellent management, consistent programming, and appropriate infrastructure. This section provides a list of recommendations that will make North St. Thomas a healthier and happier place to live, walk, bike, and cycle.



# MANAGEMENT

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

- Continue working with the Elgin Children's Network DNP Committee to create an annual implementation strategy for temporary projects such as events and activities to animate public spaces throughout town.
- Develop a separate implementation strategy for longer-term projects that will require more community buy-in and municipal support.
- Continue to collect user data to monitor and measure success of the wayfinding distance program and community ice rink projects.
- Identify opportunities for ongoing funding mechanisms for programming and management.



## BROADER PUBLIC REALM

- Work with city council and municipal managers to improve programming and maintenance of neighbourhood parks.
- Communicate with the public. Set up a website or use traditional and social media to promote events and activities throughout North St. Thomas

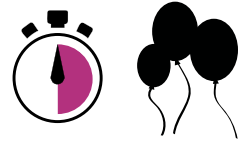




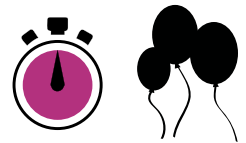
# PROGRAMMING

## EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

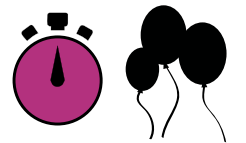
- Maintain and build on the existing calendar of community events. Use these gatherings as an opportunity to talk to residents and collect new ideas.



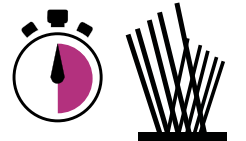
- Implement low hanging fruit by using existing resources and public gathering spaces. Identify events that can be held outdoors in summer and moved indoors (schools, Neighbourhood Hub) during the winter months. Begin hosting movie nights, exercise classes, participatory gardening, and children's activities within the short term. Ensure activities and events appeal to a wide range of ages and users.



- Host a small-scale community based event or activity at least once a week at the Neighbourhood Hub (ie. yoga classes, children's crafts, live music).



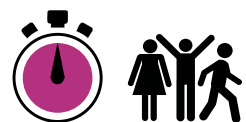
- Use temporary 'pop-up' projects, like colorful art installations, to transform underperforming or vacant spaces in the short-term



- Develop a long-term funding strategy for programming and activities.



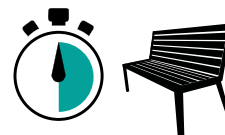
- Foster relationships developed with the principals, staff, and parents at the two schools. Continue working with these important stakeholders to identify opportunities to collaborate on community events and address barriers to using school infrastructure for public programs.





## PARKS

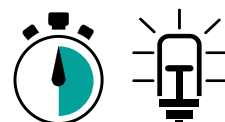
- Work with the City to address infrastructure gaps in the parks and public spaces in North St. Thomas. Funding in this area should be prioritized in the following areas:
  - More benches, picnic tables, and diversified seating options (ie. moveable charis) in the neighbourhood parks
  - Safe and accessible entrance to Waterworks Park for pedestrians and cyclists



- Explore ways to animate parks and public spaces during off-peak seasons.
  - Fire pits, snow/ice sculptures, ice skating, shelters, indoor spaces, etc.



- Improve the lighting in the public realm. Work with the City to develop a lighting strategy that adds to the ambiance and enhances safety.



- Research opportunities to install public washrooms and drinking fountains within or next existing parks



## BROADER PUBLIC REALM

- Make all public spaces in North St. Thomas universally accessible.



- Develop a public realm strategy for the neighbourhood. Use this strategy to guide the future development and stewardship of



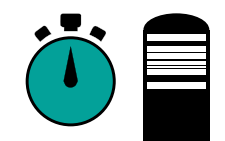
- Improve access and user flow through the neighbourhood green spaces and Waterworks Park by improving the quality and maintenance of the walking trails.



- Enhance the streets and sidewalks with trees and greenery. Focus on native plantings.



- Add a community events and information board in a visible location.



## POP-UP LIBRARIES

- Solicit book donations from local residents. Identify community members that are interested in expanding the project and possibly hosting Free Little Libraries in their front yards



## SOUTH EDGEWARE BEAUTIFICATION

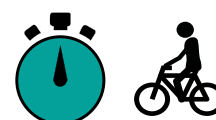
- Further engage the public to identify specific changes and infrastructure investments they want to see along South Edgeware to make it a more pleasant, safe place to be



- Work with the City to continue investments on cycling infrastructure along South Edgeware. In particular, encourage them to extend the bike sharrow from Waterworks Park to Burwell Road.



- Use the new cycling strategy as leverage for expanding the neighbourhood's cycling network onto wide residential streets such as Confederation Road.



- Work with the schools and parents to organize a bike rodeo day. This will help educate students about cycling safety and plot out safe cycling routes to school. Such an event would be most effective at the beginning of the school year.



- Continue to promote cycling and pedestrian activity as areas of focus for the central business district



- Work with designers and landscapers to install more greenery and identify opportunities to convert excess road/parking space to pedestrian areas.















Appendix



# PROJECT CASE STUDIES

## Ontario Community Ice Rinks

Community ice rinks encourages people to get outside, be active, and enjoy the company of their neighbours during the cold winter months. Many cities across Canada and Ontario support local community members in developing public ice rinks, but the models differ in their deliver of the program and costs. A municipality will typically require that a citizen-led committee of at least four volunteers will commit to the responsibilities of maintaining the ice rink and recruiting other neighbours in supporting the project. This committee or neighbourhood organization will also be responsible for submitting a formal application, indicating where the rink will be located, how water will be accessed, and what materials are needed. Grants are offered by the municipality in Brantford, Guelph, Hamilton, and Kitchener to support the infrastructure and materials costs of the project. The majority of ice rinks in Ontario are operated for pleasure skating, but some municipalities do allow community groups to authorize unorganized games of hockey to be played at certain times, and under specified safety conditions. Many municipalities, including Toronto, will provide free outdoor ice rink maintenance workshops for community members who are interested in developing their own rinks.

## Toronto Natural Ice Rink Program

The City of Toronto operates an innovative Natural Ice Rink Program out of their Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Division, which allows city residents to build outdoor ice rinks on city property in their neighbourhood. Residents must apply to the City to participate in the program, and to receive permission to construct an ice rink. Applications are only considered, “for Parks, Forestry and Recreation properties with existing winter water services, flat areas with adequate drainage, and will not disturb the adjacent neighbours.”





The City provides successful applicants with access to winter water service, water key, hoses and nozzle, two snow shovels per rink, lighting where available, instruction on how to build and maintain a natural ice rink and public signage. The use of boards is permitted, at the discretion of the City, if they are supplied, installed and stored by the community group, and are not higher than 10”.

### Project Crosswalk Oakville

The Town of Oakville hosted the Municipal Urban Designers’ Roundtable (MUDR) group, a group of over 30 urban designers from across southern Ontario, on Friday, October 17, 2014. This group regularly meets to discuss issues and trends in urban design and planning. The focus of this meeting was tactical urbanism — small-scale changes generated by community-based ideas that can bring about permanent change. To implement a tactical urbanism project, participants painted two new artistic crosswalks at the intersection of Robinson and George streets in downtown. The winning design entitled “The Treeswalk,” by City of Toronto Urban Designer Ran Chen, was selected from over 40 crosswalk design submitted by MUDR members.

Video: <http://goo.gl/nBOKq3>



### Mole Hill Laneway Garden

The Mole Hill Community Garden was created in 2002 in the laneways of this Downtown Vancouver neighbourhood. Resident volunteers partnered with the Community Housing Society and the City of Vancouver to convert their laneways from paved alleys to productive green space. The laneway gardens feature 76 fruit and vegetable plots, as well as native plants, edible berries, herbs, and flowers. The garden plots were constructed using recycled bricks and lumber. Gardeners use rain barrels for watering during periods of drought, and use mason bees for cross-pollinating flowers and plants. The larger



# PROJECT CASE STUDIES

laneway beautification project also included traffic calming measures by narrowing the car lanes, planting new trees, and removing parking spaces.

<http://goo.gl/eSe5gS>

## Pavement to Parks

San Francisco's Pavement to Parks program converts excess roadway or underused parking areas into small parks or plazas for pedestrian use. Seating, landscaping, and paving treatments are common features of all projects. Although the plazas are designed as temporary installations, several plazas have been made permanent after the pilot phase proved successful. The program was established in 2009, and now functions as a partnership between the city's Planning Department, Department of Public Works, the Municipal Transportation Agency, and local community members. The designs and materials are paid for privately and shepherded by local business owners or community organizations who agree to oversee maintenance. As of January 2013, thirty-eight parklets have been installed throughout San Francisco, and the program is being emulated in cities around the world.

<http://goo.gl/V0BCN2>







## Better Block

The Better Block project is a demonstration tool that rebuilds an area using grassroots efforts to show the potential to create a great walkable, vibrant neighborhood center. Described as a ‘live workshop,’ community members and municipalities work together to re-engineer, re-program, and re-design streets, sidewalks, and underused public spaces into people places. These projects allow cities to rapidly implement new infrastructure, streetscaping and policy changes in a way that is inexpensive and immediately impactful. Simple and affordable materials such as planters, small trees, and moveable street furniture are used to test out new configurations and build support for long term investments. This project began in the auto-oriented city of Dallas, Texas but has since been replicated in cities around the world.

## Living Innovation Zones

San Francisco’s Market Street connects the city from water to hills, through residential neighbourhoods and business districts alike. But for decades now, the street has been little more than a thoroughfare—a way to get from A to B but not to stop in between. But a recent initiative by the city seeks to change that by doing away with its former regulations, and turning city-owned land into flexible spaces called Living Innovation Zones for artistic exploration dedicated to connecting people. A partnership between the San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Civic Innovation, the city’s department of planning and Public Works, the Living Innovation Zones are places for community groups to come in and install temporary installations that enliven the streets without having to go through the same cumbersome permitting process that would typically halt any type of major installations, especially by smaller local groups. “We’re really asking people to push us. With permitting you often get this culture of no. We’re asking

them to push our limits,” said manager and planner Steve Gennrich. The first LIZ installations included a pair of “whispering dishes,” that enabled people to whisper to each other from across the plaza, a musical bench activated by hand-holding and a pedal-powered cell phone charging station. <http://www.8-80cities.org/doablecity/making-change/>

## Working with Schools to Unlock Public Space

Sometimes all it takes to unlock public space resources is simple communication. McAllen, a city of about 130,000 in southern Texas instantly increased its public park space by hundreds of acres by working more closely with the school board to upgrade school playgrounds and develop protocol to leave the fields and facilities unlocked after school hours. New York City later did the same as part of PlaNYC to help reach its goal of having every New Yorker live within a five to ten minute walk of a park by 2030. They added a whopping 290 new parks to the city through the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program. Many cities in North America have done the same and continue to do so, showing over and over again that the space for place is always there – it just takes a little imagination to find it. <http://www.8-80cities.org/doablecity/hidden-assets/>





### Everyday Poems for a City Sidewalk

A program dubbed Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk invites residents of the city to submit poems to be displayed as permanent public art. Some of those poems are selected by a judging panel and imprinted into the new concrete that is being poured. Replacing broken sidewalks is part of the regular maintenance regime of any city. But since 2008, the city of St. Paul, Minnesota has turned this mundane task into an engine for infusing the everyday lives of its residents with meaningful public art. The project was conceived by Marcus Young, the city's official artist-in-residence. The project is seen as a win all around. In times when the use of taxpayer money is always scrutinized, it's an affordable way to plentifully populate the city with public art. Most citizens love it — the city gets over 100 submissions of poetry every year and frequently gets calls from people requesting poems outside of their house.

<http://www.8-80cities.org/doablecity/hidden-assets/>



### The Happy Wall

Copenhagen, Denmark

The Happy Wall is a 100-foot interactive public art installation in Copenhagen, Denmark. The surface of the Wall consists of nearly 2,000 wooden boards that can be flipped to reveal various colours. Everyone is welcome to manipulate the flaps to create pixellated patterns, symbols, or messages. There's even a sliding ladder to help people reach the top. As a testament to the Happy Walls' popularity, more than 4600 pictures have been uploaded to Instagram with #Happywall hashtag. A second Happy Wall was recently constructed in the happiest place in the world - Las Vegas.

<http://www.guerrilla-innovation.com/archives/2014/08/000857.php>



## Themed Playgrounds\_Malmö, Sweden

Twenty themed playgrounds offer free and imaginative outdoor fun for families and children in Malmö, Sweden. Local favourites include the Fairytale Playground next to Malmö City Library, the eco-friendly Solar Playground adjacent to the Green Market organic food store, and the Adventure Playground which hosts a whimsical obstacle course. Other playgrounds are designed for worldly exploration and beyond, such as the Space Playground, Africa Park, the Jungle Playground, and the Sea and Beach Playground. Each playground offers different attractions, challenges, and activities for different age groups.

<http://www.malmotown.com/en/article/themed-playgrounds-in-malmo/>



## Winter Warming Huts

Winter in Winnipeg is cold, but these temporary huts on the frozen Red River are helping to warm the city with colour and creativity. This design competition attracts ideas and concepts from around the world. The winning warming huts are placed along the city's 1.2km skating trail at The Forks, a public market and historic site. In recent years, the Warming Huts competition has also included a temporary indoor restaurant, set up right on the ice.

<http://www.warminghuts.com/>



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