



**2017 SUTA FINALIST:
20 AVENUE STREET LAB PARTY**

Nominee: J. Malzer, MSc, PEng.

1.0 Project Outline

20 Avenue N Street Lab Party

The 20 Avenue N Street Lab Party was a first for Calgary – a public engagement trial using temporary materials to transform a street into a possible complete street configuration. This document describes the steps and tools that were developed to host the 20 Avenue N ‘Street Lab Party’. This project was initiated and completed in 2016.

Why Host a Street Lab?

The City of Calgary hosted a Street Lab on August 20, 2016. The 20 Avenue N street lab party involved piloting street enhancements using tactical urbanism principles: inexpensive, quick, and temporary. The opportunity was intended to allow residents to participate in the planning and execution of the improvements to determine whether the benefits and drawbacks can be more fully assessed through experiences and observed data sets as compared with more traditional engagement approaches. Some of the temporary installations included:

- Painted pedestrian refuge
- Three kinds of dedicated bicycle infrastructure using paint, flower pots and hay bales
- Accessibility course with partners (Canadian Institute for the Blind, Alberta Motor Association, Access Design Committee, City of Calgary bike ambassadors)
- Active living ambassadors and activities
- Public Art (permanent)
- Placemaking including creating a Paris-style café on private property
- Rain garden
- Food trucks

The one-day event was highly supported by community participants, local residents and businesses, and City business units. The team heard some positive messages about the street lab, including:

- Effective form of public engagement
- Easy to visualize possible transportation improvements and form an informed opinion
- Participation by residents who might not otherwise have the time or opportunity (i.e. high number of children and families)
- Businesses reported high sales associated with the events
- Community capacity building to build relationships and take on other community enhancements
- Legacy enhancements that remained in the community

In all, data was measured in six categories including speed and count data on crossing streets. Building on the positive response in each data category, the team assembled a manual, similar in organization to this nomination document, to help inspire and guide future street lab events.

2.0 Award criteria alignment

Contribution to the development and enhancement of sustainable urban transportation

Traditional public engagement can be slow and doesn't allow an experiential perspective in reviewing options. Further, traditional engagement usually takes place during the dinner time which makes it challenging for several demographic groups to participate fully. This new approach allowed residents to fully appreciate or personally measure the benefits and drawbacks (i.e. removed parking) of a complete street retrofit as an individual or family.

Allowing certain groups a voice in the public process is anticipated to advance inclusion of active transportation goals more quickly. Further, the project demonstrated that vehicle speeds were slowed on crossing streets and that businesses reported higher sales figures.

Innovation

The street lab allowed for greater partnerships and to demonstrate the value of a street beyond the pavement. Streets enhancements are often sold as a chance to add vibrancy and inclusion and it was powerful being able to program that vibrancy with partners, if only on a short term basis.

Transferability: Canadian Communities

The challenges around public engagement and re-allocating road space more equitably to better accommodate all modes is common across Canada. This project demonstrated that it is possible to engage with residents on a temporary complete street retrofit and that the conversation was highly productive and supportive. The final outcome is a guide to help instruct future street labs (summarized below).

Added value:

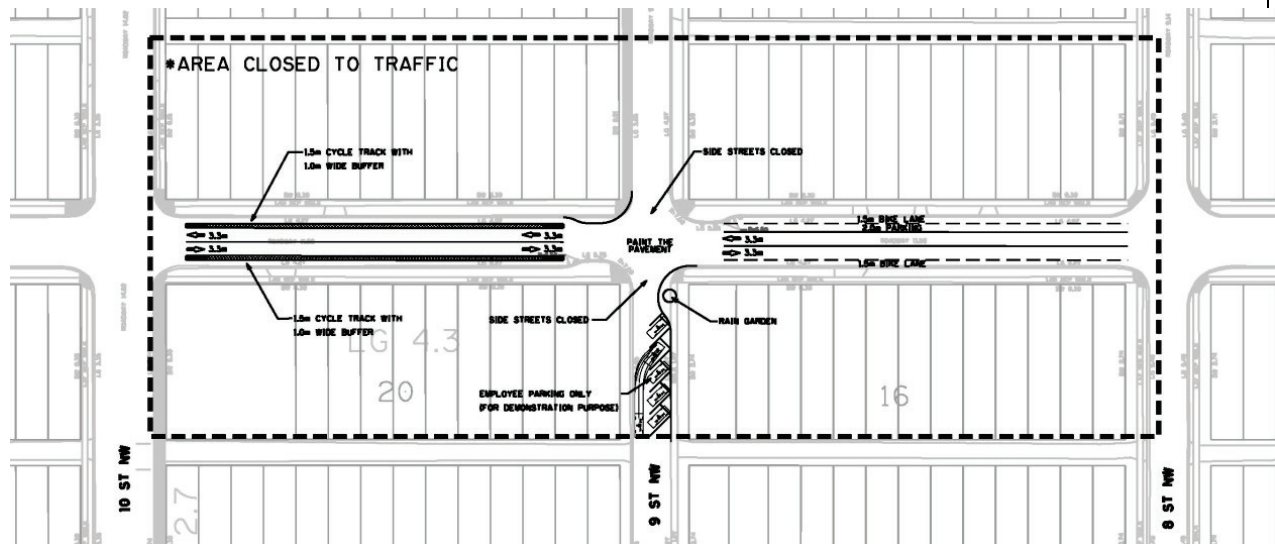
Though the community participated in selecting the street lab concepts each option was compliant with local and national guidance documents including MUTCD. Ultimately, the pilot represented a prototype for permanent active modes infrastructure.

Below is a shortened version of a street lab manual developed by the project team.

1. Choosing the right spot (June 18):

One of the most important decisions is choosing a location **with a problem needing solving**. 20 Avenue N was selected though it wasn't current planning corridor since the adjacent communities had expressed an interest in better walking and biking infrastructure. Using 20, it would be possible to trial engagement without impacting an ongoing project (i.e. a true pilot). Initially, the project team had proposed looking at the stretch between 15 and 18 Street NW but community meetings revealed an appetite to be more prominent and intercept more users. In the end, the two blocks between 10 Street and 8 Street N were selected and allowed:

- Meeting point of two communities
- Important bike lanes intersecting site
- Adjacent to businesses with a front parking lot that could be repurposed for the pilot
- School with green space for an active living exhibit and parking space for safety education
- Few driveways and access points



Hints: who are you trying to serve? Whose opinion are you looking for? Are there public parcels to set up on? Are there other projects or events to link to? This step may take a couple of rounds of meetings to get right. Stay flexible and focused on opportunities.

2. Confirm objectives:

A project plan was created and shared with City and community stakeholders. Once everyone agreed to the goals, and a Departmental champion gave signoff, the project planning started in earnest. Your goals should be referenced in every decision that's made. Risks in particular should be updated as you go along.

Hints: though 20 Avenue had many elements the goals were always about attempting a new form of public engagement first and foremost. Try to stick to one or two goals; too many and participants will be unclear on priorities.

3. Draft a schedule:

Laying out the schedule made it possible to approach partners to participate with more certainty, and the ability to create communications to involve volunteers meaningfully. Shorter time frames were easier for volunteers though more challenging for internal stakeholders to prioritize against other work.

4. Cast the net:

We were so pleasantly surprised with who was excited to participate! Cast a wide net and be flexible to their ideas – some with definitely align and others will be available maybe not this time but next. In our case, public art was able to contribute an artist and art project. This component remains a legacy to the project though the project team wouldn't have thought to ask! In the end, there were a number of components to 20 Avenue N and each one had a champion.



Photo: public art by Megan Morman



Photo: #GetMovingYYC Ambassadors

Hints: Some good ideas were proposed but without a champion were not carried forward. Being flexible is key – every event is unique and you can always save good ideas for next time. (Jen's little chalk library for the bus stop was taken home by young artists. Will have to try again next time!)

5. Find the fixes:

Meetings were held with all stakeholders to understand:

- Limitations: avoid Sunday due to heavy church parking or street will not be opened for first event)
- Concerns: still provide some short term parking or connect with 10 Street bike lanes)
- Opportunities: approach local (plant) nursery who likes to participate in community events

This information was really helpful to populate a list of issues to overcome and to then layer on the ideas.

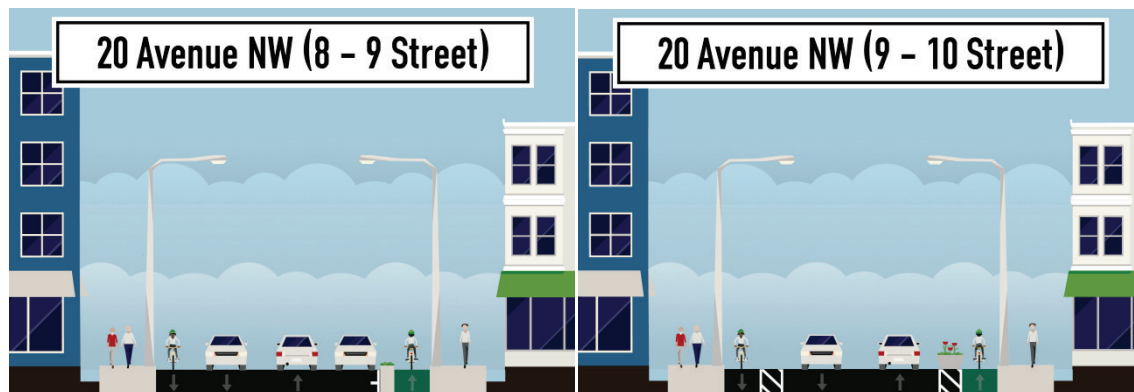


Hints:

- One of the fixes became the availability of materials: tree stumps were available from trees that were cut about a week before the event to build a sidewalk at a nearby elementary school. The community helped decide how to use them.
- Hosting planning meetings locally (i.e. local restaurant or business) was positive, built support and allowed participants to consider the context during meetings.

6. Options and solutions:

With the fixes known, it was possible to come up with options - such as where pedestrian refuge would fit, bike lanes and art. A meeting with all stakeholder groups together started with examples from other cities to demonstrate how much work would be involved and to inspire ideas. The meeting was held in a community restaurant and being onsite allowed the group to step outside and visualize the project. The meeting also helped identify other possible partners and materials.



Hint: cross sections were developed by Transportation staff and shown to the community to decide on their preference. In the end, the community suggested a new cross section that was vetted and approved by the second (final) big team meeting.

7. Logistics:

A second large group meeting was held to start to go over logistics. There were a lot of logistics! The tree stumps needed to be picked up, and then claimed after the event. Spray paint and foot stencils were needed to paint the intersection. How much duct tape would be needed to cover one block's centreline (answer: four rolls). One of the more challenging parts was finding the right paint for different parts of the plan. A lot of time was spent anticipating the materials and explaining the steps to volunteers.

A number of permits and permissions were required: street closure, paint the pavement, public art. All of these were from The City of Calgary, and circulating the plan through the City's event team helped identify opportunities and constraints.



Hints:

- It seemed a risk to the project goals to close the street to traffic, though it did give the team opportunities to build improvement more informally. Also, the team could try cross sections with substandard lane widths, which could only be built by moving curbs.
- Parking vouchers were provided to houses along 20 Avenue to help offset the negative impacts of the parking restrictions.

8. Communications

Have a plan for recording meeting decisions, advertising and finding volunteers. Some things to consider are:

- Bold signs and community posters (lots!)
- Plan how to and who will live tweet the event
- Twitter handle, and a list of contacts who will push details of the event for you
- Create a Facebook a event
- Artwork with some basic information
- Let all businesses, parent groups and City groups know how they can participate
- Have signs with information on the elements of the street lab (i.e. is this a roundabout? No, it's art / traffic calming)

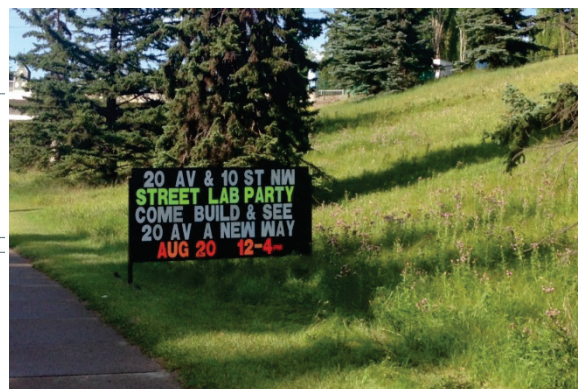
Calgary  **20 Avenue N.W. Street Lab**
Come help build and test temporary pedestrian and cycling improvements, public art, safety symposium, and more!



Saturday, August 20
12 noon to 4 p.m.
20 Avenue between 10 Street and 8 Street N.W.

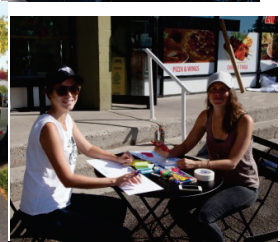
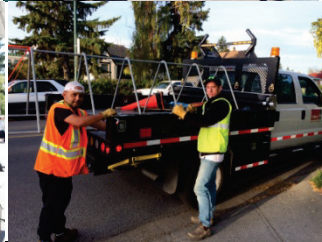
To volunteer or for more information:
calgary.ca/stepforward

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9. Firm the team:

Team leads were found for each component and short briefings helped them understand describe their 'station' to community volunteers. Two volunteer coordinators helped answer questions on the event day and a volunteer kit described each element of the plan and was emailed to everyone who participated. Good weather and treats from our local bakery was great fuel – and lunch from our two food trucks!



10. Measuring success:

Tactical Urbanism is intended to contribute to achieving the outcomes of the pedestrian strategy. To determine whether the event would be successful, a measurement plan was designed ahead of the event. It was important to measure a number of result areas and find ways to assess each. The following made up the plan, and though the trial period was relatively short it was important to resolve “how” the data could be collected:

- Public engagement:
 - boards were a good way to gather input, consider more permanent easels that would do better in wind
 - offer information boards describing the street lab elements (i.e. explaining the intended benefits of the proposed pedestrian and cycling enhancements)
- Speed and count data: the data showed that the event attracted participation and slowed passby traffic on 10 Street W as compared with the previous Saturday.
- Stakeholder surveys: stakeholders and volunteers were emailed a survey following the street lab. In future, sending the questions in an online tool might result in greater / easier access.
- Volunteer continuity: community members were the same at the start and end of the pilot indicating perhaps the workload, timeframe were appropriate and project was worthwhile.
- Business activity: business indicated that the event attracted customers as compared to similar Saturdays.



20 Avenue Street Lab Team

Community Association Volunteers		Parks	Ron Buchan
Capitol Hill	Erin Shilliday, Darren Courtnage, Krista Phillips, Kerri Peyton, Jerrad Kubik, Mavis Sew, Aartie Fernando, Tony Mallette	Liveable Streets Division	Jonathan Chapman, Kim Fisher, Katherine Glowacz, Dale Lynch, Jen Malzer, Tom Thivener, Peter Yee
Mount Pleasant	Brenden Smith, Owen Tobert, Murray Anderson, Jen Miller, Clayton Annis, Tania Wildman	Roads	Greg Iwaskow, Joanna Domarad, Anthony El'araj
Banff Trail	Kathryn Davies, Rob Hirsh, Leah Dow	Network Planning	Cameron Matwie, Glenn Davis, Matthew Watts
Partners		Accessibility	Leanne Squair, Patrick Sweet
CBE	Brad Kormann	Engage	Marcia Dupuis
Framboise Bakery	Catherine Tetrault	Communications	Pooja Thakore
Crown Pizza	Tajamal Hussain	Data	Brian Gaas
Property Owner	Sonny Tang	This is My Neighbourhood	David Plouffe,Carolynn Tooth, Catherine Gulinao
AMA	Lisa Nowlin, Jillian Whyte	GetMovingYYC	Sarah-Jade Kozier
Bike Calgary	Agustin Louro	Special events	Janet Lavoie, Teresa Byrne
Open Streets	Mike Jones, Gerald Wheatley	Calgary Police Service	Dean Vegso
Plantation		Placemaking	Kim Haskell
YYCFoodTrucks	Pinoy Pride, Happy Fish	Urban design	Lothar Wiwjorra, Asia Walker
University of Calgary	Katarina Moyra Graves	Main Streets	Desmond Blik
Institute of Transportation Engineers	Sid Ahuja, Cory Wilson, Charlene Wilcock, Alan Kuan, Megan Fernandes, Simon Fernandes	Urban Strategy	Kate Zago
Calgary Access Committee	Lui Greco, Cal Schuler	Calgary Neighbourhoods	Brenda Annala, Heather MacKay
City of Calgary		Public art	Sophie-Anne Belisle, Rachael Seupersad
Cycling Ambassadors	Alex Butler, Anastasia Conly, Jaffra Markotic	Ward 7	Druh Farrell, Dale Calkins
CPA	Christina Casallas, Kevin Bulmer	Water	Natasha Kuzmak, Rachel Sank