

FINAL Meeting Minutes  
Oak Park Avenue Streetscape Steering Committee  
Tuesday, March 21, 2023 – 7:30 AM  
Public Works Center

1. Call to Order

Staff Liaison Eric Otto called the remote participation meeting to order at 7:37 AM.

Roll Call

Present: Mike Fox, Anan Abu-Taleb, Kim Henry, Emily Lloyd, Monika Robinson, Tracey Royal, Jim Solnes (participating remotely), Meg Svec

Absent: Liz Holt, Laura Kitsos, Sandra Medina, Frank Russo

Staff: Village Engineer Bill McKenna, Staff Liaison/Civil Engineer Eric Otto, John Helfrich (Terra Engineering), Jamil Bou-Saab (Terra Engineering), Manisha Kaul (Design Workshop), Sara Egan (Design Workshop), John Harris (a5)

Member Fox made a motion to allow remote participation. It was seconded by Member Royal. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

2. Agenda Approval

Member Fox made a motion to approve the agenda. It was seconded by Member Abu-Taleb.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Ayes: Fox, Abu-Taleb, Henry, Lloyd, Robinson, Royal, Svec

Nays: None

The motion passed 7 to 0.

3. Non-Agenda Public Comment

None

4. New Business

4a) TEAM INTRODUCTION ANR REVIEW OF ROLES

John Helfrich, from Terra Engineering, explained the role that Terra Engineering and Design Workshop (along with other consultants) will play in the process before allowing the other members of the design team to introduce themselves. Next, the Committee Members introduced themselves and shared any organizations or businesses they would be representing throughout the process.

#### 4b) OPEN MEETING ACT (OMA) TRAINING

Staff Liaison Otto explained that the Steering Committee is subject to the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and he will be sending out information regarding OMA training that the Village Clerk has suggested that all Steering Committee members take. Once the training is completed, the members will receive a certificate that should be sent to Staff Liaison Otto, who will then turn it in to the Village Clerk.

#### 4c) LIMIT OF WORK

John Helfrich explained that the streetscape project area is Oak Park Ave, from Pleasant St to Ontario St. There will also be some utility work that will extend farther north and south, as well as some intersection modernizations, but the streetscape design will be the main focus of the Steering Committee.

#### 4d) DESIGN PROCESS

John Helfrich explained that the project was put on hold during the pandemic and the design has evolved during that time. The creation of the Steering Committee allows the Village and members of the design team to interface and collaborate with the community stakeholders instead of solely relying on public open houses. He also explained the three design phases of the project (Discovery Phase, Alternatives Phase, and the Final Schematic Design).

#### 4e) UPCOMING SCHEDULE & MILESTONES

John Helfrich outlined the tentative schedule for the project, noting that the team hopes to present the Final Schematic Design to the Village Board in July 2023.

#### 4f) PROJECT VISION

Manisha Kaul shared that the broad vision for the project is to define a clear brand for the Hemingway District that elevates the position of Oak Park Ave while supporting businesses and ongoing redevelopment efforts.

#### 4g) WHAT WE HEARD (2019-2020)

Manisha Kaul shared the feedback the design team received in 2020 when they did their initial presentation, including what people loved about the existing design of Oak Park Ave and what they felt was missing. She went on to detail the various elements the design team sees as important when considering what makes a street great and shared images of streets around the world to support her points.

#### 4h) DRAFT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Manisha Kaul presented the five key goals and objectives for the project which are 1) create a destination and brand, 2) improve safety, 3) re-purpose the right-of-way, 4) design a resilient streetscape, and 5) ensure a responsible investment. As she explained

each goal, she provided specific examples of ways that the goals could be accomplished and how they related to the feedback that was received in 2020.

Member Fox asked for clarification about the scope of the project to help better understand the level of involvement of the Steering Committee and how to respond to questions from members of the public. He stated that it is important to show business owners, including those who are barely surviving as it is, that the end result will be better than it is today and worth the challenges that will come throughout the process. John Helfrich reiterated the scope of the project and explained that some of the scope is to be determined by the Steering Committee. Manisha Kaul agreed that communication will be very important, especially during the construction phase.

Member Abu-Taleb reiterated the importance of keeping small businesses thriving during the project. He also noted that if possible, the project should be divided in a way that makes it easier for consumers and keeps it as traversable as possible during construction. John Helfrich responded that the lessons learned from previous projects in Oak Park, along with the insight from the Steering Committee, will help the design of the project come together in a way that effectively minimizes disruptions.

Member Fox asked if construction would occur this summer and John Helfrich responded that the goal is spring 2024 for construction.

Member Fox asked for clarification about budget for the project so that the Committee doesn't waste time. Village Engineer Bill McKenna explained that staff is asking the Steering Committee to present their recommended streetscape project to the Board in July along with conceptual costs, as well as some other cost consideration options so that the Board can make the ultimate decision from a budgetary standpoint. He explained that there is a placeholder amount programmed for the streetscaping component (around \$4 million), and the Board understands that that number is going to be vetted and refined through this process. That number doesn't include all of the underground work that has to occur. It's also important to remember that all of the underground work will really be driving the construction impacts and the scope of closures. The underground work won't be the focus of the Steering Committee, but you should be aware of the extent of the overall project.

Member Royal asked if the \$4 million was determined prior to Covid-19 or if it's a more recent number. Village Engineer McKenna responded that the amount is older and will need to be adjusted for inflated construction costs, but the Board is aware of that. We also have about \$6 million in underground work to do. With the Lake St project, the Steering Committee was specifically instructed to not look at costs and that undermined and lengthened the whole process. We don't want to be in that situation again, especially

considering time constraints, and as a design team, we're always going to be evaluating so that we're presenting something that's going to be tolerable by the Board.

Member Robinson recommended that accessibility be highlighted more as a goal. Sara Egan suggested that the safety goal be changed to "Improve Safety and Accessibility" to elevate accessibility to a goal level.

#### 4i) POLLING QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Sara Egan presented 11 questions to the Steering Committee for discussion. The full responses will be attached in their entirety to these minutes, but below are some of the items the Committee discussed.

- People don't refer to the area as the Hemingway District so that shouldn't be the focus of the design
- Unifying the area with downtown Oak Park instead of distinguishing it as its own district
- Ensuring that the streetscape is accommodating of today's lifestyle
- Ways that people utilize the area
- How the Committee members rate the appearance of the area today
- Top priorities when designing the Oak Park Ave streetscape
- The need for bike/stroller parking
- That the design should be similar to that of other districts in Oak Park, but have some distinguishing characteristics
- Changes in the way that people use the street
- If public art should be incorporated
- If there should be a flex-space that could be closed for temporary events
- Various features and strategies that could be incorporated into the design
- Improvements to the area under the viaduct

#### 4j) NEXT STEPS

The Steering Committee decided to tentatively schedule their next meeting for April 26, 2023 at 8 AM.

#### 5. Old Business

None

#### 6. Adjourn

With no further business, Member Fox made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Member Abu-Taleb. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:09 AM.

Submitted by:  
Anna Muench  
Administrative Assistant- Engineering

# What does the Hemingway District aspire to be? What words come to mind?

community space inclusive  
historical visuals supporting name  
streamlined allows flow library and park  
work vibrant reflection of history hub of village  
historic user friendly  
peaceful dtop fun proud shopping  
diversity dining



# I utilize the Oak Park Ave Hemingway District to...(select all that apply)



I shop here



I dine here



I work here



I own a business here



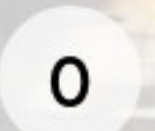
I live here



I own property here



I run errands here



I worship here

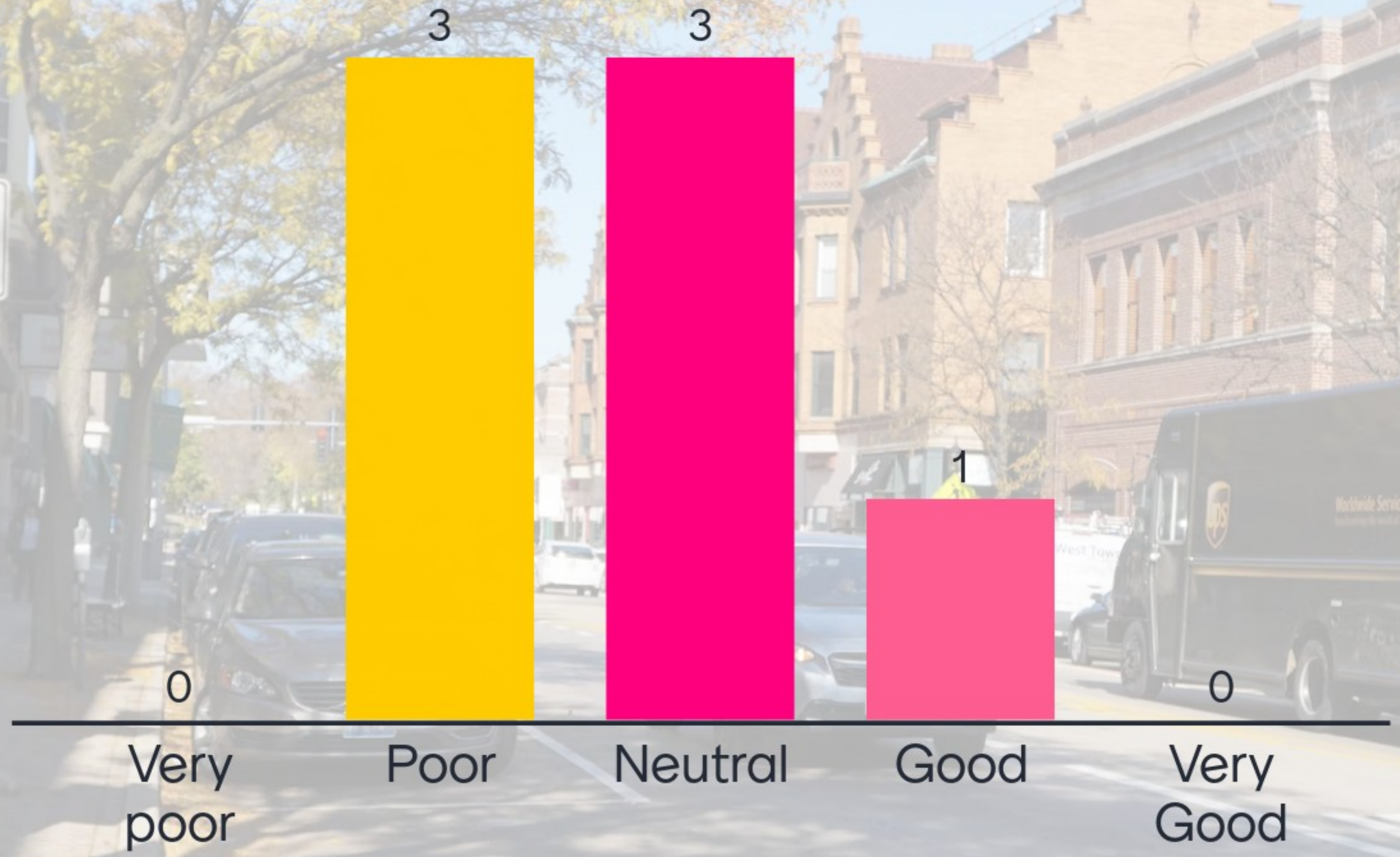


I visit family-oriented venues (library, etc)



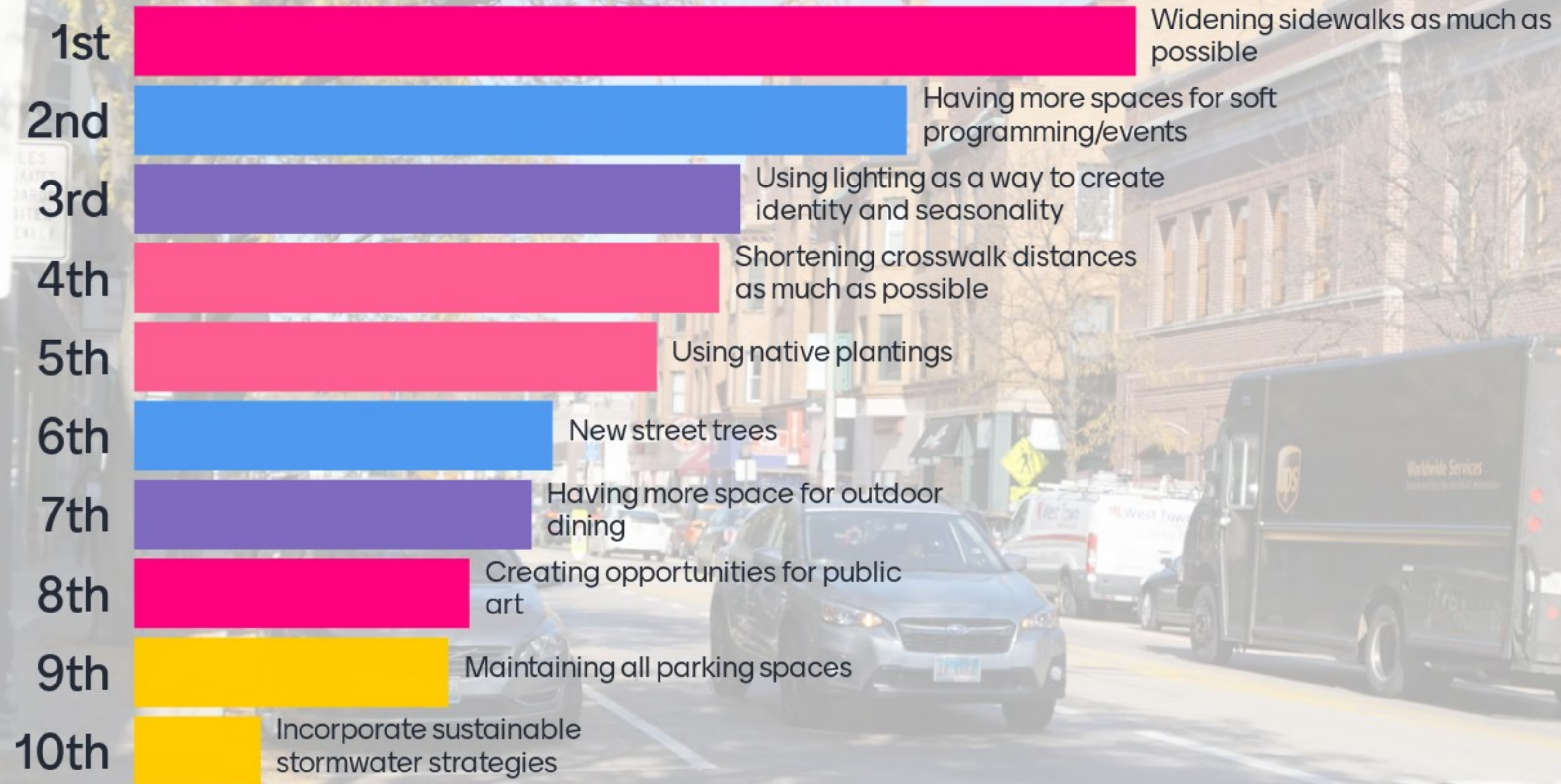
I visit bars and entertainment venues

# How do you rate the appearance of Oak Park Ave. Hemingway District today?





# Please select your top 5 priorities for the design.



# Should the design and materiality of the Hemingway District be the same or very similar to that of The Pleasant District and North Marion Street?

0

Yes - the District should match the other Districts exactly



7

Yes - it should be similar, but have some distinct qualities

0

No - the Hemingway District should have its own "look and feel" (an entirely new set of materials)

0

I do not know

# What has changed in the way people are using the street or in how they desire to use the street?

More outdoor experiences

More takeout/delivery, more biking and walking, more use of the park (scoville), just doing more outdoors

Diversity in shopping options

More outside eating. More bikers needing to park their bike. More trees and plants.

More dining/walking up/down all areas. Deliveries are more prevalent.

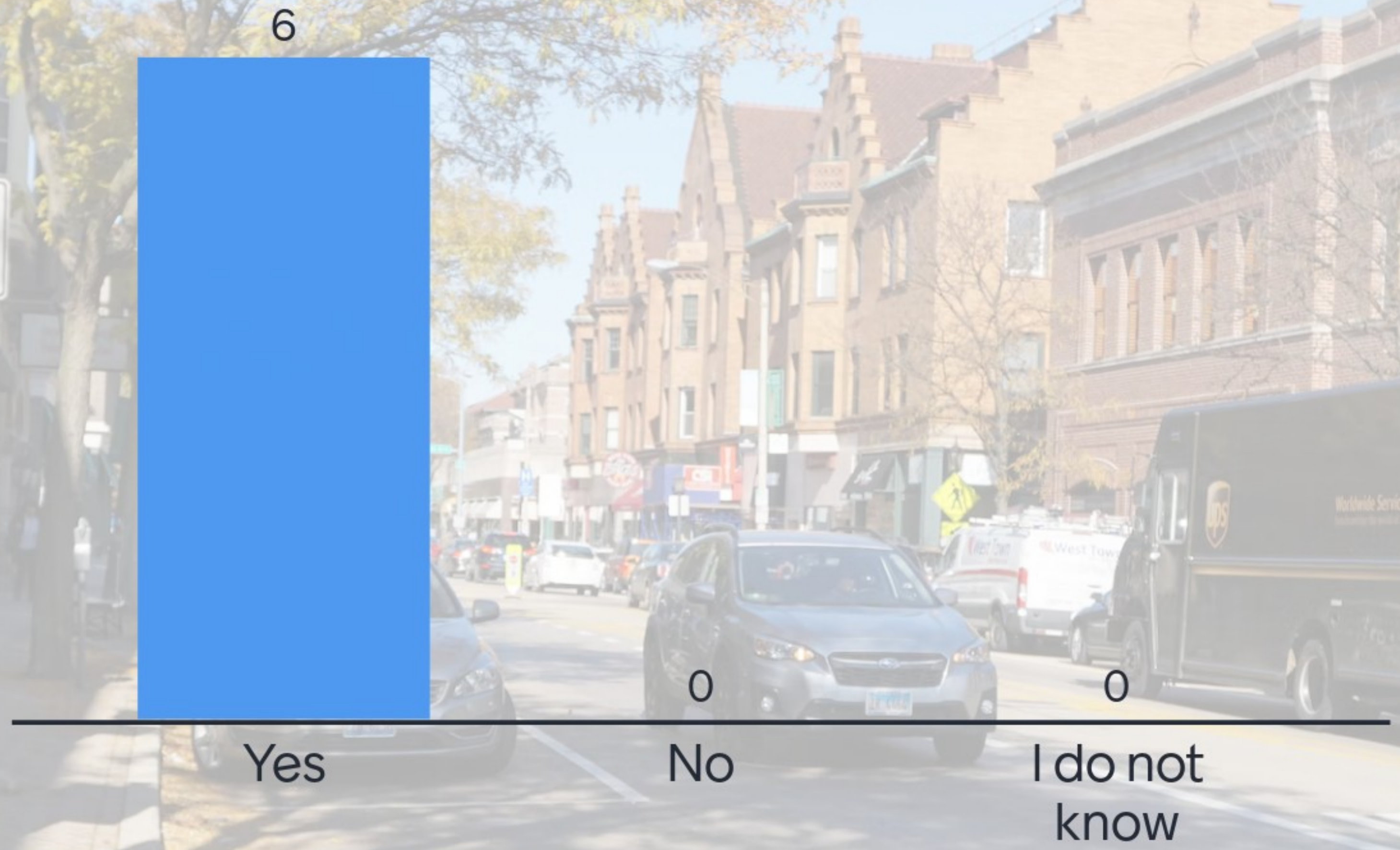
Yes

People are walking to a destination and not browsing, lingering or spending time on the street

I think all the space on the train tracks should be filled with creative artwork and murals.



# Are you interested in creating space for public art within the streetscape?



Are you interested in a design that allows for closing a portion of Oak Park Ave for temporary events?

4  
Yes

1  
No

2  
I do not know

Please select any of the strategies below you would like the team to incorporate into the streetscape design:



Outdoor living rooms



A water feature



An outdoor fire place



A flexible space for large events in the street/parking areas



A flexible space for smaller "pop-up" events in the alley (Hunter Court)



Moveable cafe seating



Iconic lighting in key areas



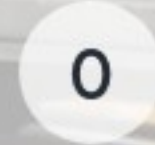
An overhead or vertical gateway element



Elements of color



Patterns / Texture



I have other ideas I will share with the team



# How would you measure the success of the streetscape design for the District? (Select top 3)

0

Increase in retail sales

0

Increase in retail and office rental rates

0

Increase in sales and property tax revenues

0

Increase in pedestrian activity

0

Ability to accommodate large crowds

0

Increase shade and seating

0

Slower traffic speeds

0

Increased bicycle parking

0

Improved pedestrian safety



**What ideas do you have that were not discussed yet today?**

