

Briefing Note

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Rethinking public street space in Saint Raymond: A brief in support of active transportation

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Abstract

What lightweight improvements could be implemented in the Upper Lachine corridor that support and facilitate active transportation, not only into and out of the Saint Raymond neighbourhood, but also within it? The primary challenge of this research was to work with what already exists along Upper Lachine (the limited and oddly shaped bits of public space between buildings, and streetscapes interrupted by alleyways) and propose ways to re-appropriate that space in a manner that promotes active transportation objectives. The research acknowledges the realities of limited financial resources, the potential for conflict with business owners over the re-prioritization of space, and ensuring that design concepts could “fail-safely”, if they did not meet design objectives. Research work concentrated on both what could happen, and also on how to make it happen.

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Upper Lachine Corridor: Active Transportation Plan-Phase III-8: Final Proposal

Background - Site Location, Existing Conditions Sheet 1 of 4

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Site Location in Neighborhood Context



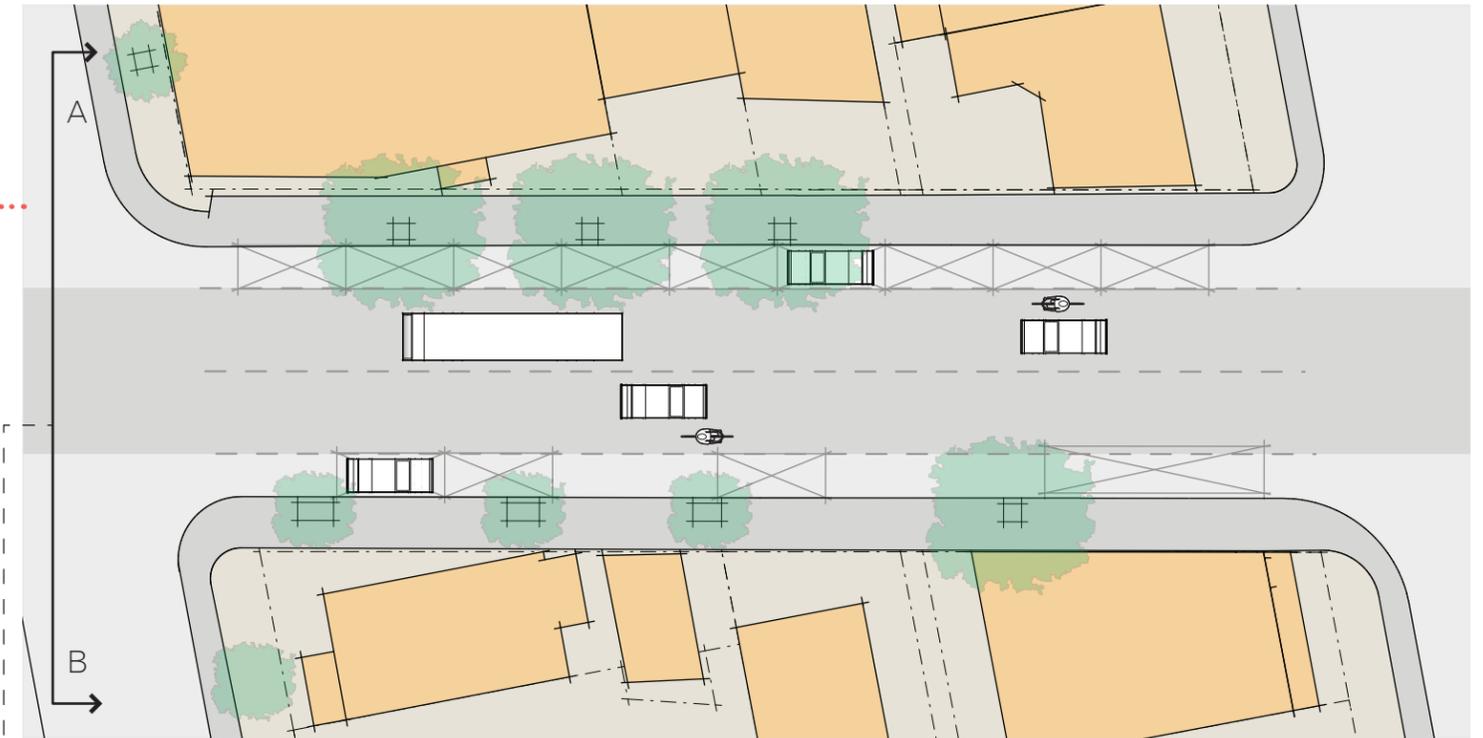
Mandate:

- Propose improvements to street/area that *support* and *facilitate* Active Transportation alternatives *to, from* and *within* the Upper Lachine corridor.
- Propose interventions that will improve the quality of the street environment for *people*.

Objectives:

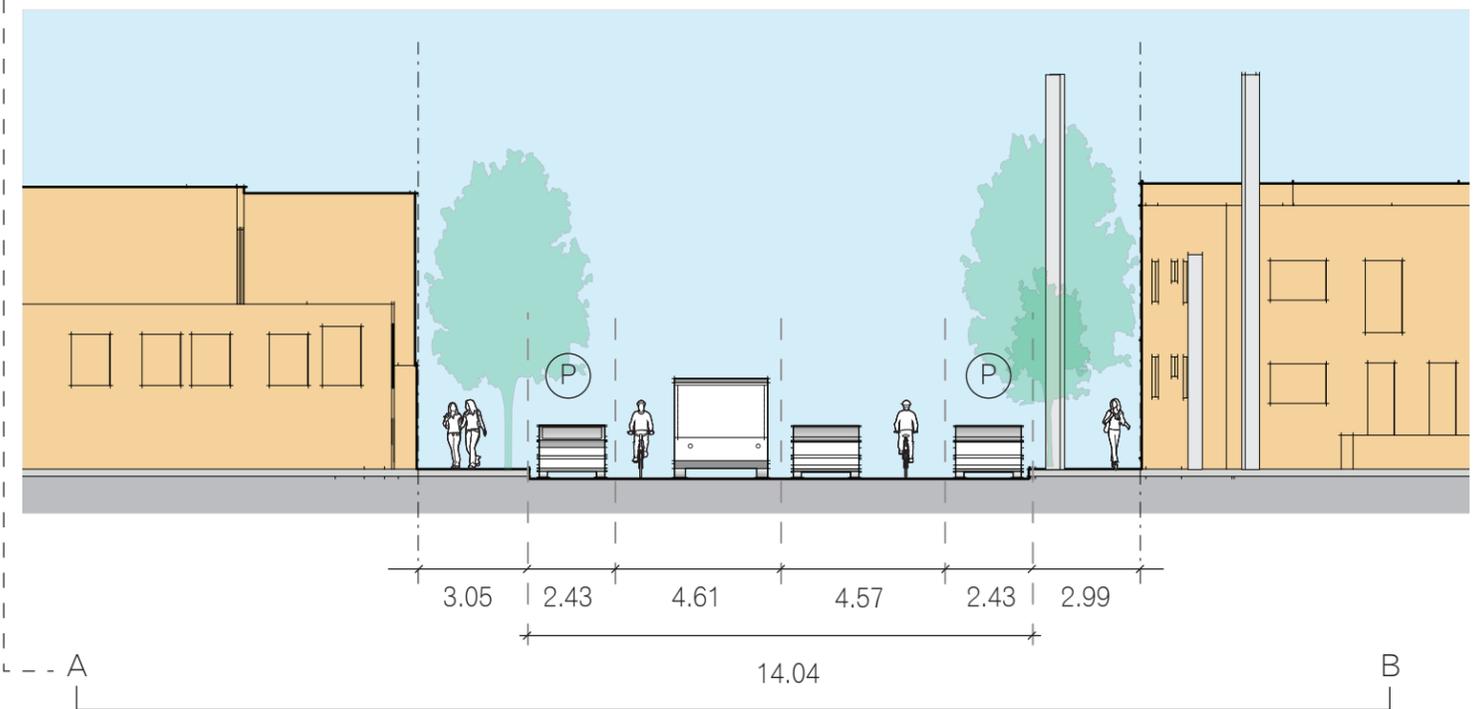
- I. Increase the quantity of individuals who are partaking in “street life”
- II. Increase the duration which individuals are partaking in “street life”
- III. Increase the level of pedestrian activity along Upper Lachine
- IV. Increase the level of cycling activity along Upper Lachine
- V. Improve the perceptive quality of active transportation infrastructure for users
- VI. Ensure minimal damage to ground plane improvements due to winter maintenance
- VII. Improve the level of commerce for businesses located along Upper Lachine
- VIII. Maintain automobile traffic-flow at existing volume levels, while reducing speeds

Existing Plan View



12 existing parking spaces; limited seating opportunities; and wide right-of-way.

Street Section Facing East



Wide curb to curb distance; wide lanes with fast traffic; and limited pedestrian space between most buildings and tree pits.

Upper Lachine Corridor: Active Transportation Plan-Phase III-8: Final Proposal

Phase 2 Proposals - Tactics - Buildings and Permanent Active Transportation Infrastructure - Sheet 3 of 4

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Existing Condition



Many buildings do not properly address Upper Lachine.

Precedent: Monkland Village Facade & Use Conversion



Proposed Intervention: Improve Facade Transparency

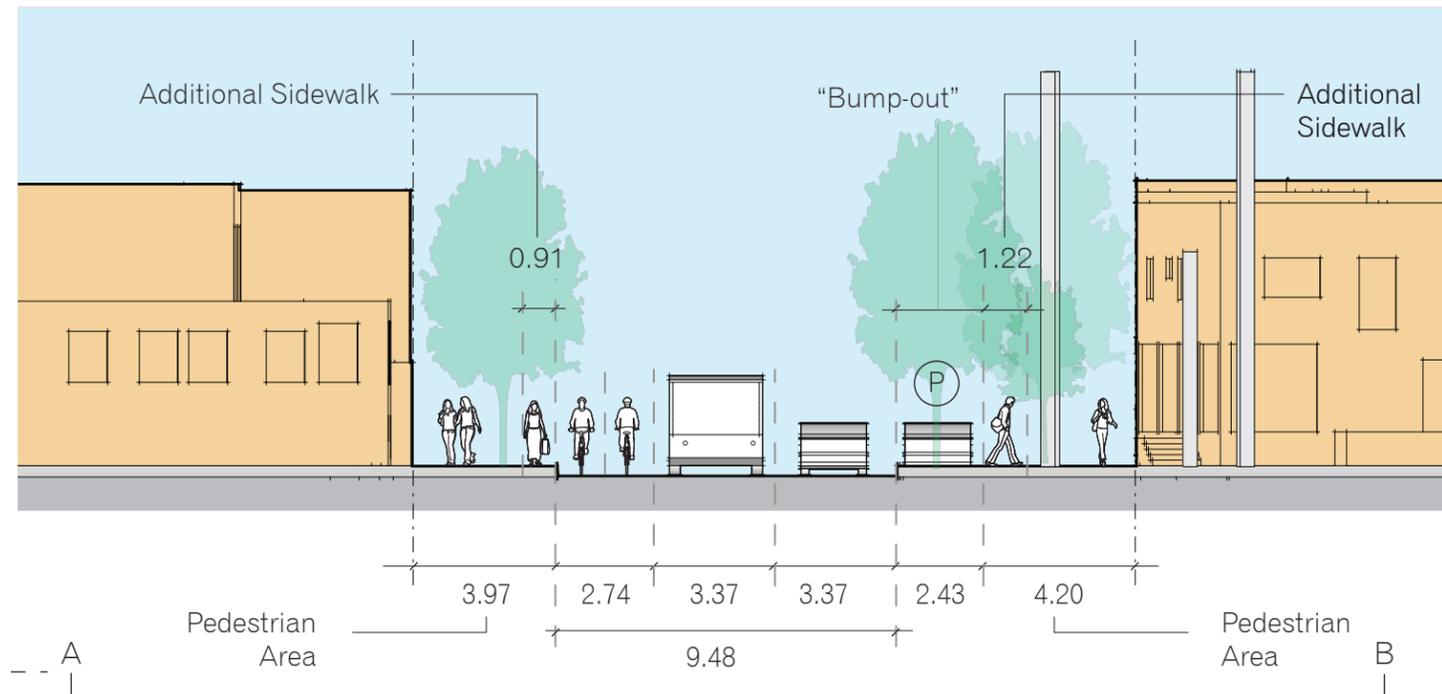


Plan View



7 parking spaces maintained; more area for proper bus stop waiting; more primary seating; and 6 more trees!

Street Section Facing East



Two-way single side seasonal bike lanes; more pedestrian space; and reduced pedestrian crossing width!

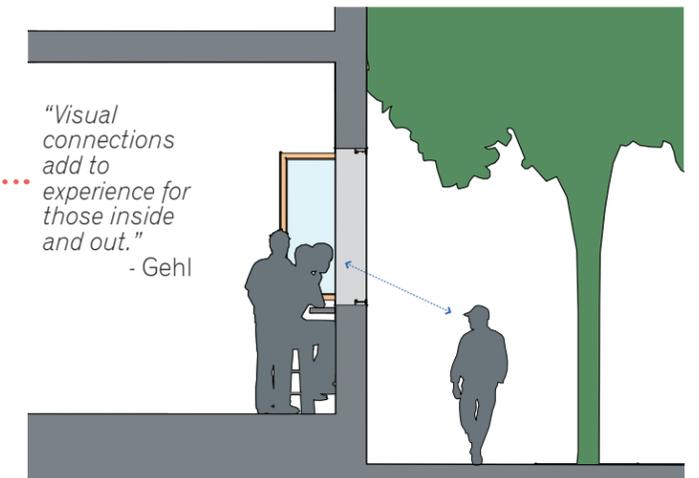
Existing Condition



Proposed Intervention: "Coffee Window"



Building and Street Section of "Coffee Window"



Upper Lachine Corridor: Active Transportation Plan-Phase III-8: Final Proposal

Implementation - Strategies, Measures and Logistics - Sheet 4 of 4

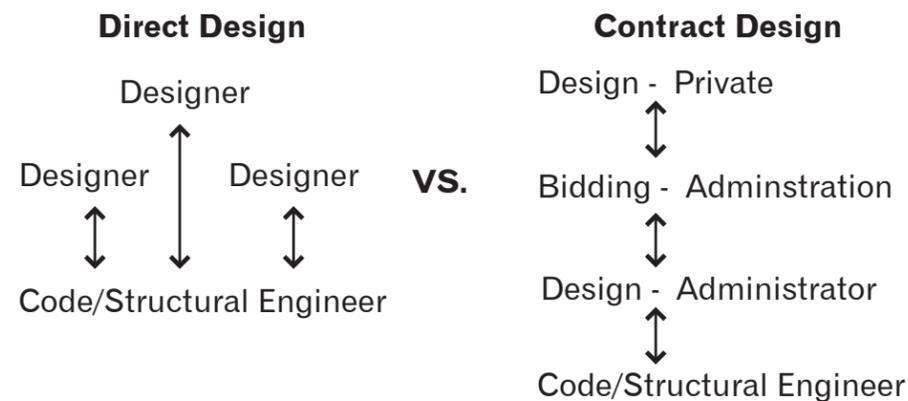
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Public Design of Private Space:

Why?

- Create value for existing property-owners.
- Enables “holistic” approach to design.
- Cost effective!

Public Design Variants:

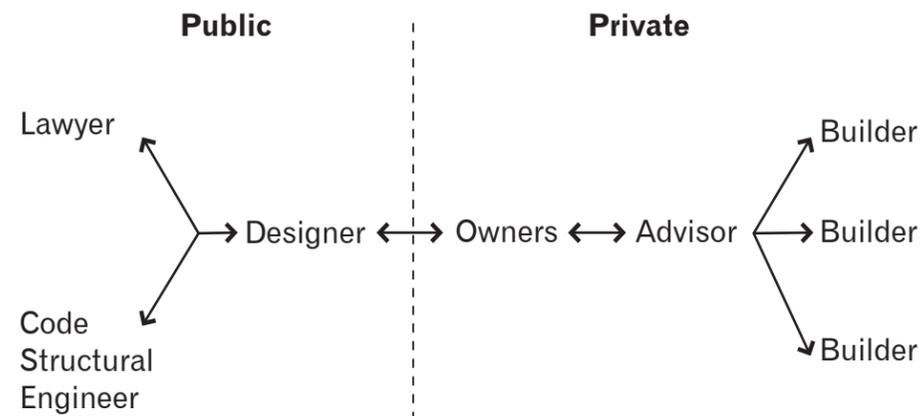


Applicable Precedent:

- Portland, Infill Design Program: Multi-Dwelling Zone: Housing Prototypes

How?

Public Private Interface



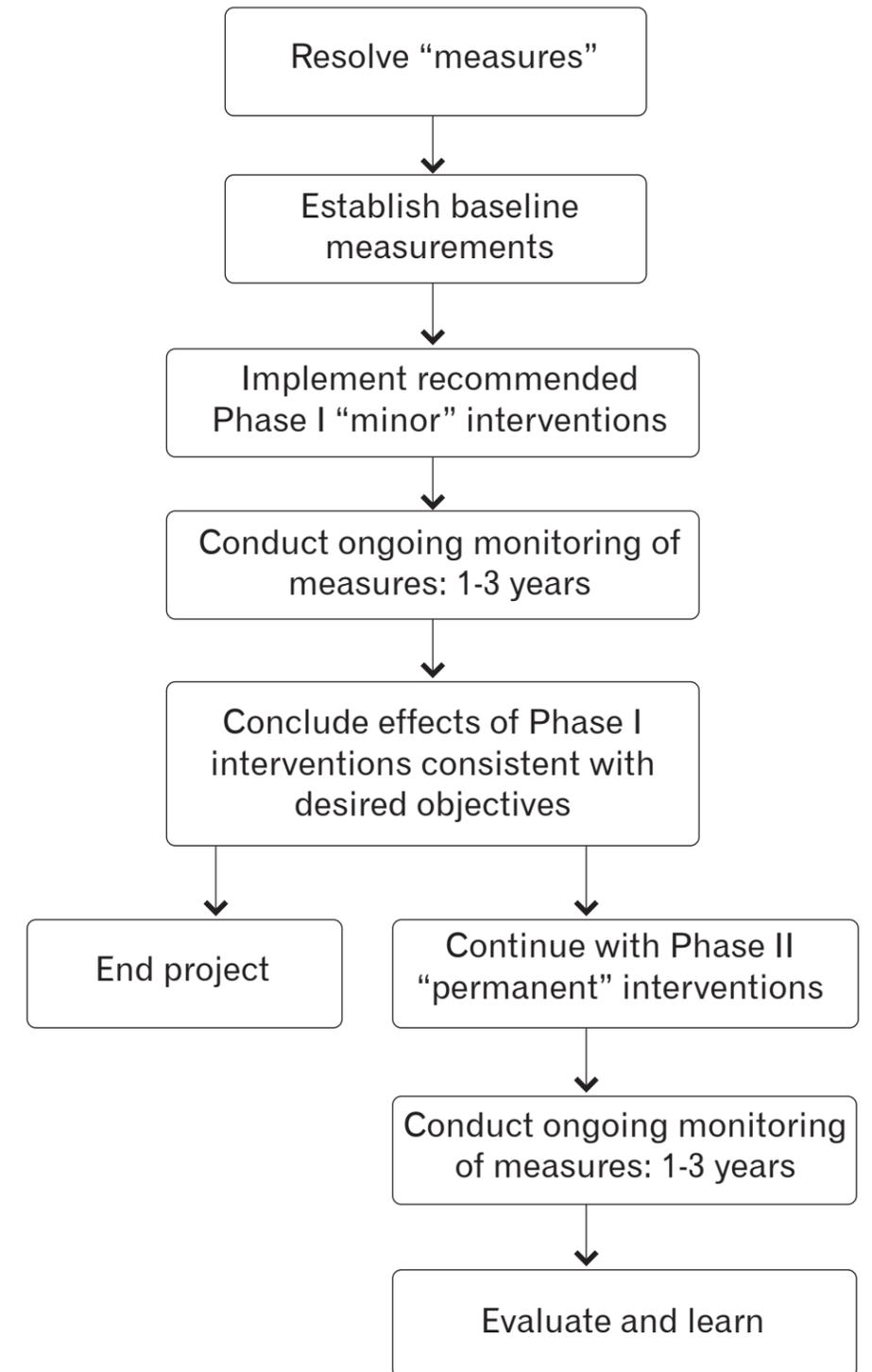
Applicable Precedent:

- Batir Son Quartier - as Advisor

Measures:

- I. Quantity of people:
 - Standing and talking;
 - Standing around;
 - Doing;
 - Sitting around; and
 - Children – doing whatever they like to do;
- II. Duration of people partaking in “street life” (see list above).
- III. Quantity of pedestrian trips:
 - Generated from the area;
 - Into the area;
 - People using the three east west axis – alleyways to the South of Railway; Upper Lachine, Saint Jacques.
- IV. Quantity of cycling trips:
 - Quantity of cycling trips;
 - Generated from the area;
 - Moving through the area.
- V. Perception of active transportation infrastructure:
 - Comfort of bus stops – summer and winter
 - Cyclists comfort level using the bike lanes.
 - Cyclists relevance of using the bike lanes (i.e., it’s worth using them to get somewhere from Upper Lachine and to get to somewhere else going through Upper Lachine).
- VI. Costs of any infrastructure damage caused by winter maintenance.
- VII. Average commercial sales per month.
- VIII. Speed of auto traffic: minimum, maximum and mode.
- IX. Point to point automobile travel time. (West - St. Jacques/Upper Lachine Interchange; East - Upper Lachine and Girouard.)

Logistical Plan:



Upper Lachine Corridor: Active Transportation Plan-Phase III-8: Final Proposal

Staging of Implementation and Perspectives on Action vs. Reaction

Plan Comprehensively - Anticipate Incremental Funding

Based on the concepts presented for the sample block, and the proposed logistical plan, what is still needed is a “prioritization plan” for the implementation of interventions along the *entire* corridor. Identified at right is a hypothetical prioritization model for funding, based on the two major project phases presented in the logistical plan.

The illustration is intended to reflect a conceptual approach to the allocation of funding; which would be based on the general proposed interventions, and the prioritization of different lots and blocks, based on their need for intervention, due to their inconsistency with objectives related to improving “street life”.

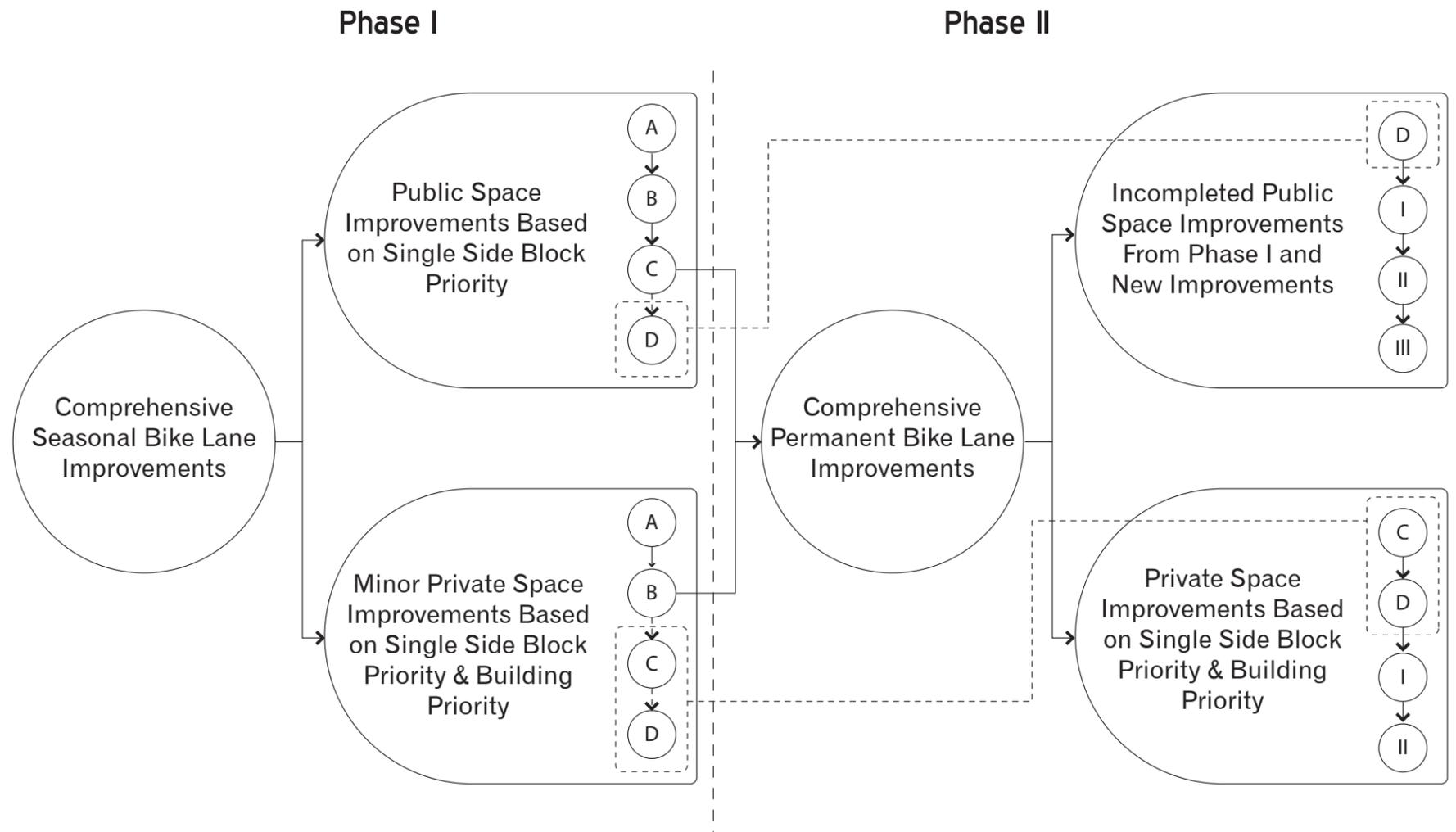
What must be recognized regarding what is proposed is the following:

- A comprehensive design plan needs to be prepared, envisioning improvements to the *entire* corridor, first. Although funding may not be provided for all interventions initially, the plan should anticipate all the potential improvements needed to achieve objectives – even if all parts are not fully developed for final implementation. A comprehensive plan, with a long range vision, along with priorities, will more likely secure a long-term commitment from funding authorities.
- Bike lane improvements must be comprehensive to be effective. In other words, lanes cannot be installed block by block, therefore funding requests need to be developed accordingly.
- Improvements to public and private space, are both important, and should complement each other, as well as the bike lane improvements.
- Implementation of more items will be easier through a longer time-frame for overall project implementation (e.g., 3 years for each phase).

In general it is anticipated that it would be reasonable from a budgetary point of view, to support most of the Phase I improvements, especially the comprehensive bike lane improvements along with a good portion of public space and private space interventions.

Those public and private space interventions that cannot be implemented in Phase I can be re-prioritized into Phase II funding cycle (as indicated in the diagram).

Further details regarding an approach to “prioritizing” the quality of existing lots and blocks is presented in the final paper prepared for the ARCH 604 Urban Design Seminar: *Prioritizing urban design interventions using the Analytic Hierarchy Process - a theoretical model*. The paper explores one of the pre-occupations highlighted at the outset of the studio regarding the application of a Structured Decision Making approach to a “real-world” urban design project.



Take Action - Now!

Through casual discourse that occurred between students regarding the future of the Upper Lachine corridor, there was much speculation regarding the potential influence of the McGill University Health Centre redevelopment.

Planning around what *might*, or even what *does* start to happen, in association with the centre, predicates the corridor’s future on external factors.

Although opportunities associated with the centre should be capitalized on, the corridor needs to envision a future where it is as “self-sufficient”, as possible.

“Waiting and seeing” what may happen before taking action ultimately means that the area is letting “someone-else” dictate its future. The question that needs to be asked, within the neighborhood, is whether this is what want, or not?