

St. Joseph Walkshop: Reimagining The Heart of Orléans

A Guided Urbanism Walk and Workshop to Unlock the Economic Potential of St. Joseph Boulevard

Event Description and Proposal

Prepared by the Rob Attrell of the Convent Glen / Orleans Wood Community Association

St. Joseph Walkshop: Reimagining The Heart of Orléans	1
2. Proposed Event Plan: A Two-Part "Walkshop"	2
3. Draft Talking Points for the Guided Walk	3
4. Engaging Stakeholders: Building Support for the Walkshop	4
So Far:	5

1. Desired Outcomes: A More Vibrant, Prosperous, and People-Focused St. Joseph Boulevard

The St. Joseph Walkshop is a proposed guided urbanism walk and interactive workshop designed to engage residents, business owners, and community leaders in a collaborative discussion about the future of St. Joseph Boulevard. This event is a pro-small-business initiative aimed at long-term prosperity for the area. It seeks to move beyond abstract plans and place the community at the forefront of shaping a more vibrant, economically robust, and pedestrian-friendly main street for Orléans.

This 'walkshop' is modeled off a similar initiative undertaken by College Ward in June 2025 ([Robertson Road Walkshop - Laine Johnson, College Ward](#)), I've reached out to them to find out more about lessons they might have learned and how that went.

Our primary goals for this initiative are to:

- **Boost Local Business Prosperity:** To identify and promote streetscape improvements that directly increase foot traffic, customer dwell time, and sales for local businesses, creating a more resilient and thriving commercial district.
- **Educate and Inform:** To provide participants with a clear understanding of the existing City of Ottawa plans for St. Joseph Boulevard, including the Orléans Corridor Secondary Plan and the Official Plan, translating complex policy into tangible, on-the-ground realities.
- **Foster Community Dialogue:** To create a platform for open and constructive

conversation about the strengths and weaknesses of the current streetscape, and to gather diverse perspectives on opportunities for improvement.

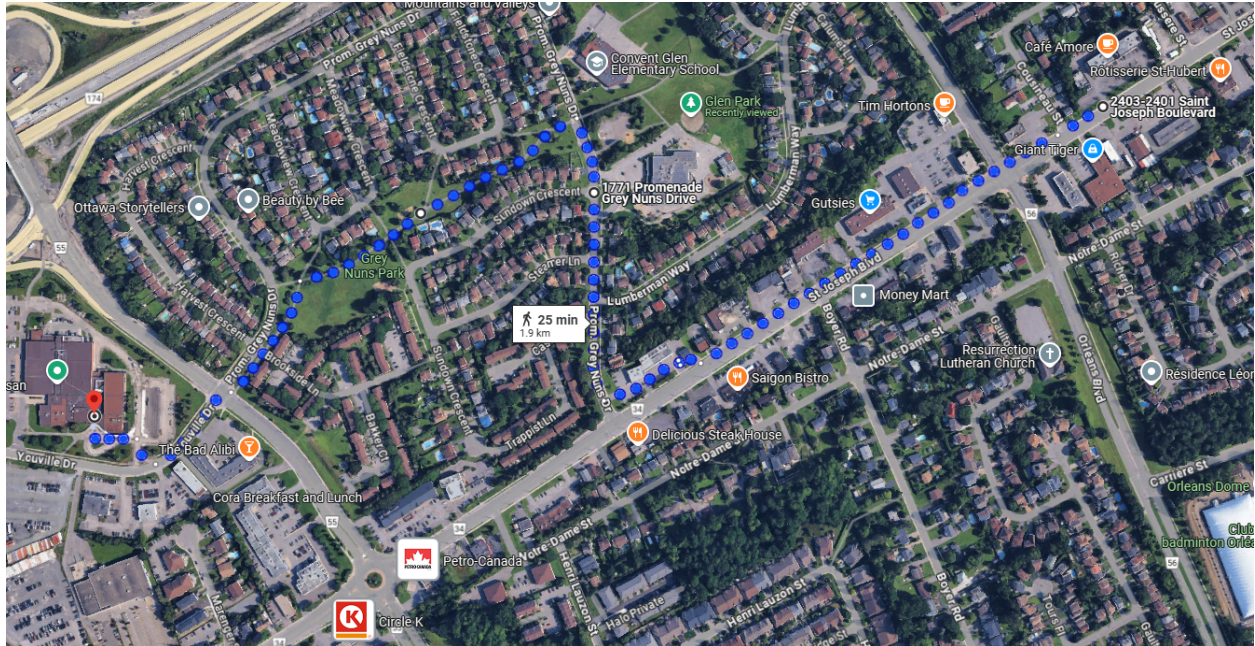
- **Identify Community Priorities:** To collaboratively identify key community priorities for the revitalization of St. Joseph Boulevard, focusing on elements such as pedestrian safety, cycling infrastructure, green spaces, public amenities, and support for local businesses.
- **Empower Community Advocacy:** To equip our community with the knowledge and a unified voice to effectively advocate for our vision for St. Joseph Boulevard in discussions with city planners, elected officials, and developers.
- **Build Stakeholder Consensus:** To bring together a diverse group of stakeholders—residents, business owners, developers, and community groups—to foster a shared sense of ownership and collaboration in the boulevard's future.

2. Proposed Event Plan: A Two-Part "Walkshop"

The "St. Joseph Walkshop" will be structured in two distinct but interconnected parts: a guided walking tour followed by a collaborative workshop discussion.

Part 1: The Guided Walk (Approx. 60-75 minutes)

- **Route:** A planned route along a segment of St. Joseph Boulevard that showcases a variety of street conditions, passing by a diverse range of local businesses and offering opportunities to highlight their role in the community. The route will be designed to be accessible to all participants.
- **The Guide:** The walk will be led by a knowledgeable guide, potentially a member of a local community advocacy group, or a guest urban planner. The guide's role will be to facilitate discussion, not to lecture. They will be equipped with talking points and visuals to spark conversation.
- **Interactive Elements:** Participants will be encouraged to share their own experiences. We will take notes to capture ideas and anecdotes, focusing on constructive solutions.



One possible route for the walkshop, down St Joseph and over to Bob Macquarrie

Part 2: The Collaborative Workshop (optional; approx. 30-60 minutes)

- **Venue:** A local community hall or library. Ideally, the workshop could be hosted by a local business on the boulevard, showcasing their space and commitment to the community.
- **Format:** Following the walk, participants will gather for a facilitated workshop. This session will involve a group discussion centered on key themes identified during the walk.
- **Activities:** Activities will be designed to be engaging and productive, such as:
 - **"Rose, Thorn, Bud" Analysis:** Participants identify positives (a rose), challenges (a thorn), and opportunities (a bud) for St. Joseph Boulevard.
 - **"Headline from the Future":** Groups write a future news headline that captures their ideal vision for St. Joseph Boulevard in 10-15 years.
- **Outcome:** The workshop will conclude with a sharing of key findings and a clear outline of the next steps for the community associations and BIA.

3. Draft Talking Points for the Guided Walk

The following are preliminary talking points, with an added focus on business benefits, that the guide can use to stimulate discussion.

- **Economic Prosperity & A Resilient Business Community:**
 - "A street that is comfortable and inviting for people encourages them to stay longer and explore more shops. How can we make St. Joseph a place people

want to spend time, not just drive to or drive through? This is about turning drivers into strollers, and strollers into customers."

- "When we add more housing options along the boulevard, we are creating a built-in, walkable customer base for our local businesses. These new residents become the 'regulars' at our coffee shops, restaurants, and stores. Let's discuss how new development is a win-win for the community and for business."
- "While parking is important, vast, underused lots don't generate sales. Let's look at examples where converting underused parking into patios, parkettes, or storefronts has boosted business. How can we manage parking more efficiently to free up valuable land for uses that create vibrancy and attract customers? Does every shop or business need their own spots, or can they be effectively shared, even if it means a short walk."
- "Let's identify 'quick wins' for businesses. Are there simple, low-cost things we could advocate for, like better signage, more benches, or seasonal planters, that would immediately improve the customer experience right in front of your shops?"
- **The "15-Minute Neighbourhood" Vision:**
 - "The City's official plan aims to create '15-minute neighbourhoods' where daily needs can be met within a short walk. As we walk, let's consider: What's within a 15-minute walk of here? What's missing?"
- **Pedestrian and Cyclist Experience:**
 - "How safe and comfortable do you feel walking along this section? What are the biggest challenges for pedestrians and cyclists that might prevent them from visiting a business?"
- **Sense of Place and Community Identity:**
 - "What gives this part of Orléans its unique character? How can we enhance that character to create a memorable destination that draws people from across the east end?"

4. Engaging Stakeholders: Building Support for the Walkshop

To ensure the success and impact of the St. Joseph Walkshop, a multi-pronged outreach strategy will be essential.

- **Community Members:**
 - **Envision what a St. Joseph that is less centred around car traffic and parking could work.**
 - Promote the event through local newsletters, websites, and social media channels.

- Distribute posters/flyers in local community hubs (libraries, community centres, coffee shops).
- **Local Businesses:**
 - **Emphasize that this is a collaborative, pro-business event designed to highlight small businesses, identify ways to make the streetscape more inviting.**
 - **The goal is to make it easier to get to St Joseph and nicer to spend time there for customers, staff, and residents.**
 - Partner with the Heart of Orléans BIA to send personal invitations to all member businesses.
 - **Invite business owners to act as 'guest experts'** at certain stops along the walk to share their unique perspective on what works and what doesn't from a business standpoint.
 - **Offer to feature participating businesses** in our event promotions and follow-up report.
 - Encourage businesses to take part in the workshop portion or offer a small promotion to attendees to drive traffic to their establishments after the event.
- **Elected Officials and City Staff:**
 - Extend formal invitations to our City Councillor, the Mayor's office, and relevant City of Ottawa planning staff.
 - Position the walkshop as a proactive and collaborative effort by the community to engage with the city's revitalization plans.
- **Developers and Landowners:**
 - Identify and invite key property owners and developers with an interest in the area.
 - Highlight the value of understanding the community's and local businesses' vision and priorities early in the development process.

By bringing these diverse voices together, the St. Joseph Walkshop can serve as a powerful catalyst for positive change, ensuring that the future of our main street is one that is designed for and by the community it serves. The Convent Glen and Orleans Wood Community Association (and other community groups), in partnership with the Heart of Orléans BIA, is uniquely positioned to lead this important conversation.

So Far:

- Reached out to Heart of Orleans BIA, seem interested but would need a business-friendly aspect
- Reached out to Mobycon, consultants who helped work on the Robertson

Road Walkshop project.

- Pitched idea to Laura Dudas, kept in the loop of steps to this point.