

# St. Joseph and Jeanne d'Arc Gateway and Roundabout Project

## Questions and Answers for BIA Members and the General Public

The City of Ottawa was awarded a \$ 2.5 million grant under the federal/provincial Economic Action Plan (Economic Stimulus Program) to do some streetscaping to Orléans' premier business area. The BIA, having studied the matter extensively over the years, reviewed its options and decided to use the funding to build a series of gateways to the Heart of Orléans. One of these gateways will feature a roundabout at the intersection of Jeanne d'Arc and St. Joseph Boulevards. The two other gateways will be located at St. Joseph and Orléans Boulevards, and St. Joseph and Place d'Orléans Drive.

This is wonderful news as it represents a tremendous opportunity to dramatically improve the look, accessibility and safety of our business surroundings and get things moving in a positive direction.

### **1. How did this project come about?**

In 2003, the City of Ottawa completed the St. Joseph Boulevard Corridor Study. In 2008, the BIA commissioned a Streetscape Strategic Plan to set priorities and suggest ways to implement them. Both recommended the creation of distinctive elements to create interest and give character to an otherwise standard commercial artery. Suggestions included improved lighting, installation of public art, the creation of gateways, traffic modifications, enhanced landscaping, and more. These suggestions would make the street more pedestrian friendly so that people would stop and shop rather than use the street as a high speed route to and from downtown Ottawa.

#### **The creation of precincts (or hubs)**

The Streetscape Strategic Plan recommended dividing the corridor into a series of distinct environments instead of treating the boulevard as one uniform corridor. The Plan proposed the creation of precincts (or hubs) and recommended streetscape improvements at key intersections or gateways.

The Arts precinct, around the Shenkman Arts Centre is one example. Already the BIA is working with landowners in this area on a few ideas to make the precinct even more exciting. The Paroisse St-Joseph area is another precinct where a formal park is being planned.

Since the \$ 2.5 million grant must be spent on streetscaping, the BIA has decided to follow the recommendation of the Streetscape Strategic Plan and use the money to create three gateways to the business sector with the most visible gateway being a roundabout at St. Joseph and Jeanne d'Arc Boulevards.

While the roundabout is a key part of the work, significant improvements to two other intersections (St. Joseph and Orléans Boulevards and St. Joseph and Place d'Orléans Drive) will be made with the addition of landscaping, outdoor furniture and other distinctive elements.

## **2. What is a roundabout?**

A roundabout is a multilane circle that allows a constant flow of traffic, eliminating the need for traffic lights. Currently, vehicles queue up to wait for the light. A roundabout lets motorists enter the circle as soon as they approach it, clearing the intersection faster. A roundabout is also a perfect setting for public art and other embellishments.

## **3. When will the roundabout be built?**

The roundabout project should start in the spring and be completed by the fall of 2010. Construction is expected to last four months.

## **4. Why a roundabout at this particular intersection?**

- **INCREASED SAFETY** The St. Joseph/Jeanne d'Arc intersection has been the scene of 65 accidents between 2005 and 2008. Roundabouts have proved to be safe and effective as motorists slow down to ease into and out of the circle. Accidents are decreased and the ones that do occur are far less serious. Studies on roundabouts in the United States, Sweden, Netherlands, Australia and elsewhere have shown a 30% decrease in accidents and a 70% decrease in collisions with injuries.
- **ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLIER** The roundabout will eliminate the need for traffic signals, and cut down dramatically on automobile idling, which makes it a good 'green' initiative.
- **APPEALING** The roundabout will have a landscaped area, adorned with public art and outdoor furniture to create an added point of interest for the community. As a rule, one percent of the grant must be devoted to public art.
- **MORE and MORE POPULAR** While roundabouts have been in existence in many countries for a long time, they are not common in Canada. But that is changing. The City of Ottawa now has a policy of installing roundabouts where possible.

The City has recently completed one roundabout at Brookfield Road near the Airport Parkway as well as three in Barrhaven, with several others in the planning stages. In the East End, the City is working on two at Trim Road south of Innes. Across the river, the City of Gatineau has recently put in several on Boulevard des Allumettières.

- **AFFORDABLE** The \$ 2.5 million grant will cover the entire cost of the gateway project including the roundabout. There will be no increase in business tax assessment.

## **5. What does a roundabout mean for cyclists and pedestrians?**

Cycling lanes will be marked right up to the roundabout where cyclists are expected to follow the same rules as motorists or disembark and use the crosswalks.

Pedestrian crossings will be set back from the circle to allow drivers to clear the circle before getting to them. Approach lanes will be designed to include a median and a splitter island to make it possible for pedestrians to cross half the intersection at a time.

Information on how to use the roundabouts safely will be provided to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians in the New Year.

**6. How exactly will the \$ 2.5 million be spent?**

The roundabout is estimated to cost between \$ 1.2 and \$1.8 million including engineering costs and construction. The grant awarded to the City of Ottawa under Canada's Economic Action Plan (Federal/provincial Stimulus Program) is for \$ 2.5 million. The remaining funding will be spent on developing the two other gateways at St. Joseph and Orléans Boulevards and St. Joseph and Place d'Orléans Drive.

The project will be managed by the City of Ottawa's Infrastructure Services Department. The Department will manage the funds and the project including design, tender and construction processes. The BIA will be responsible for the upkeep of the landscaping around the roundabout. This expense will be built into the annual budget.

**7. What kind of disruption to our businesses can we expect and for how long?**

While there will some lane reductions, access to all businesses will be maintained and crews will adjust work to accommodate peak traffic requirements. Traffic will always be able to go through although slowdowns are to be expected.

Construction is estimated to last four months. It should begin this summer once engineering plans are complete and the proper permits are in place.

**8. How will the members of the BIA and the public be kept informed of the project?**

BIA members were first informed at their AGM held on November 24<sup>th</sup>. More information has been provided by a special email to members. A public information session scheduled for January 14, 2010 at the Bob McQuarrie Recreation Complex will provide more information and preliminary sketches to businesses and the public. Time and details will be confirmed shortly.

Construction information and driving tips will be available at that time.

**9. Why is the BIA using the grant for one large project instead of several smaller ones along St. Joseph Boulevard?**

Professionals and planners of all stripes have repeatedly recommended that we focus on a single project instead of spreading the money along the four-kilometer corridor with disappointing results.

The gateway project is just one element of the Streetscape Strategic Plan. It was picked as a first step for its immediate and maximum visual impact and effect.

**10. How will drivers be informed on how to use roundabouts safely?**

As part of the project, the BIA will work with the City to develop an information campaign on how to use the roundabout. Also, a video will be posted on the BIA’s website and driving tips will be given out at the public information session in January.

While the creation of roundabouts in Gatineau has been challenging for motorists at first, additional signage and public information has since reduced problems. The City of Ottawa is in contact with Gatineau and the Québec Ministry of Transport to learn from their experiences.

**11. What about snow removal and winter driving?**

Roundabouts do not pose any particular challenge to snow removal or winter driving, providing the usual precautions are followed.

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