



Location of the Selkirk Avenue Area neighbourhood within Winnipeg.  
Prepared by Shelagh Graham

## Introduction to the area

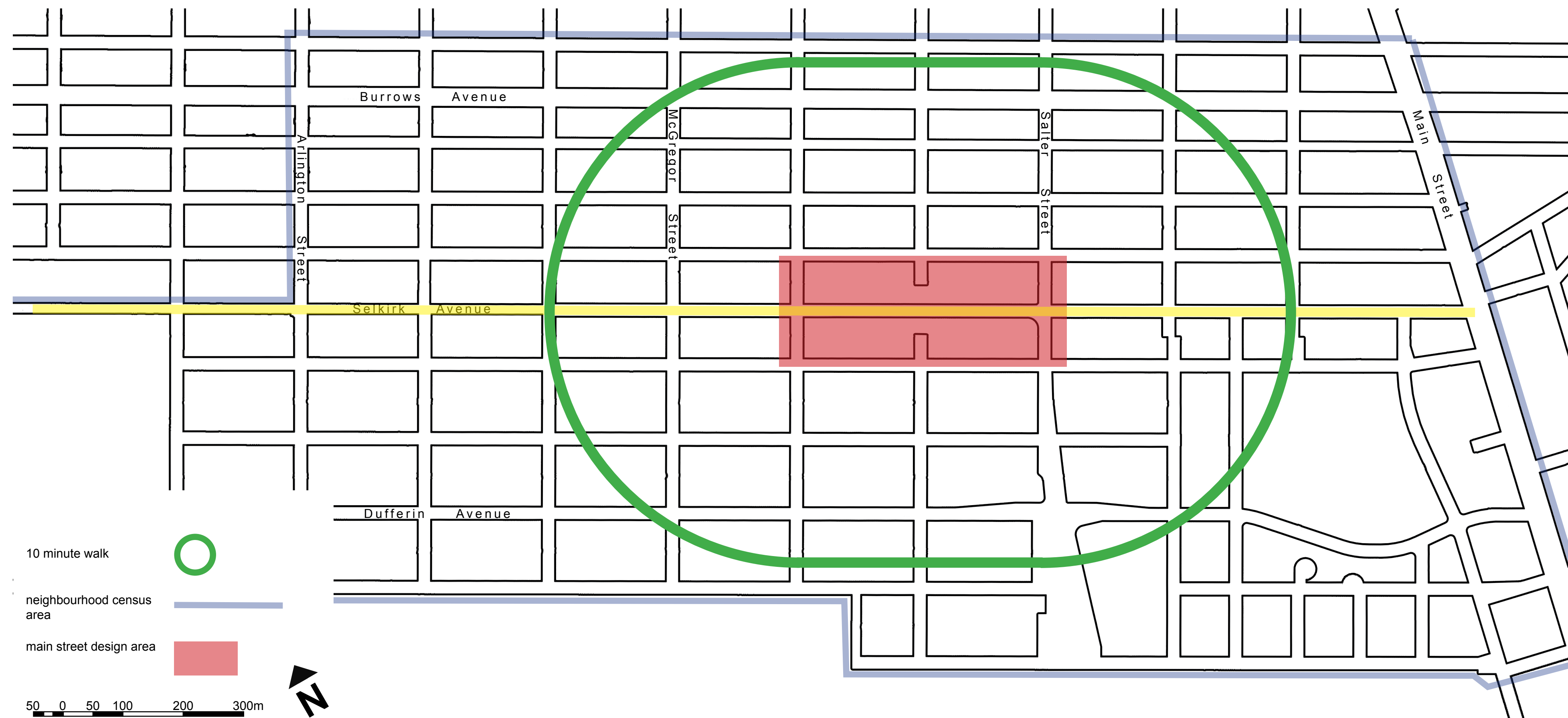
The Selkirk Avenue Area is located north of Winnipeg's downtown core and is bounded by Burrows Avenue to the north, Main Street to the east, the C.P.R. Yards to the south, and Arlington Street to the west. It encompasses the following three neighbourhoods: Lord Selkirk Park, William Whyte and Dufferin.

In 1873, Winnipeg was established from the Red River Colony on First Nations land. With the completion of the railway, Winnipeg became the Gateway to the West, and grew rapidly as many Europeans immigrated in pursuit of greater opportunities. As a result, an emphasis was put on growth, at the expense of sustainable planning.

With the rise of suburban development in the post-war era, the Area was abandoned by many of its residents, deeply impacting land values, property maintenance, and neighbourhood spirit.

This was also a time when many Aboriginal people began moving from reserves into Winnipeg. Racism, often coupled with a lack of education and urban work experience, resulted in a concentration of Aboriginal people in areas of the city where housing was most affordable, such as the Selkirk Avenue Area.

The Area still has many aspects of a vibrant neighbourhood, with its rich history, diverse population, and its strong sense of community.



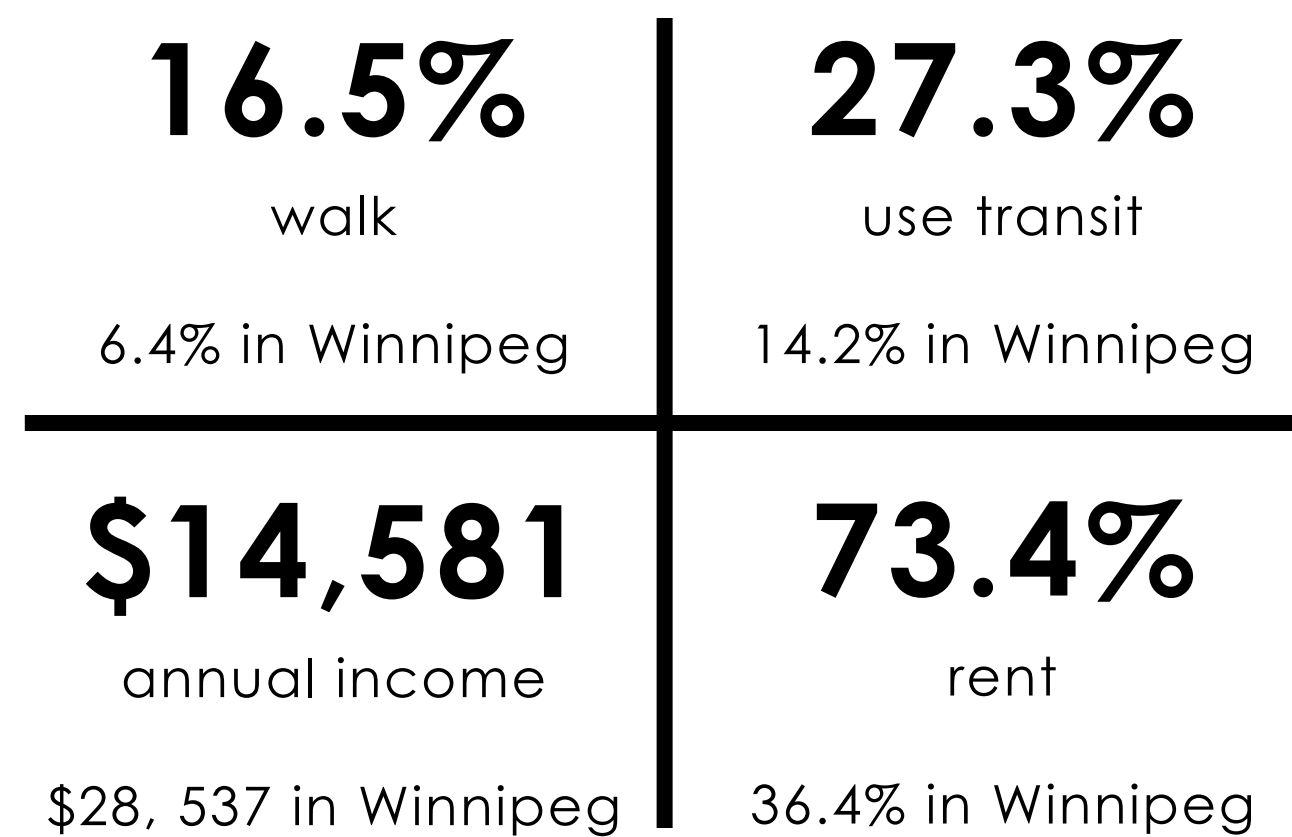
Map of the Selkirk Avenue Area



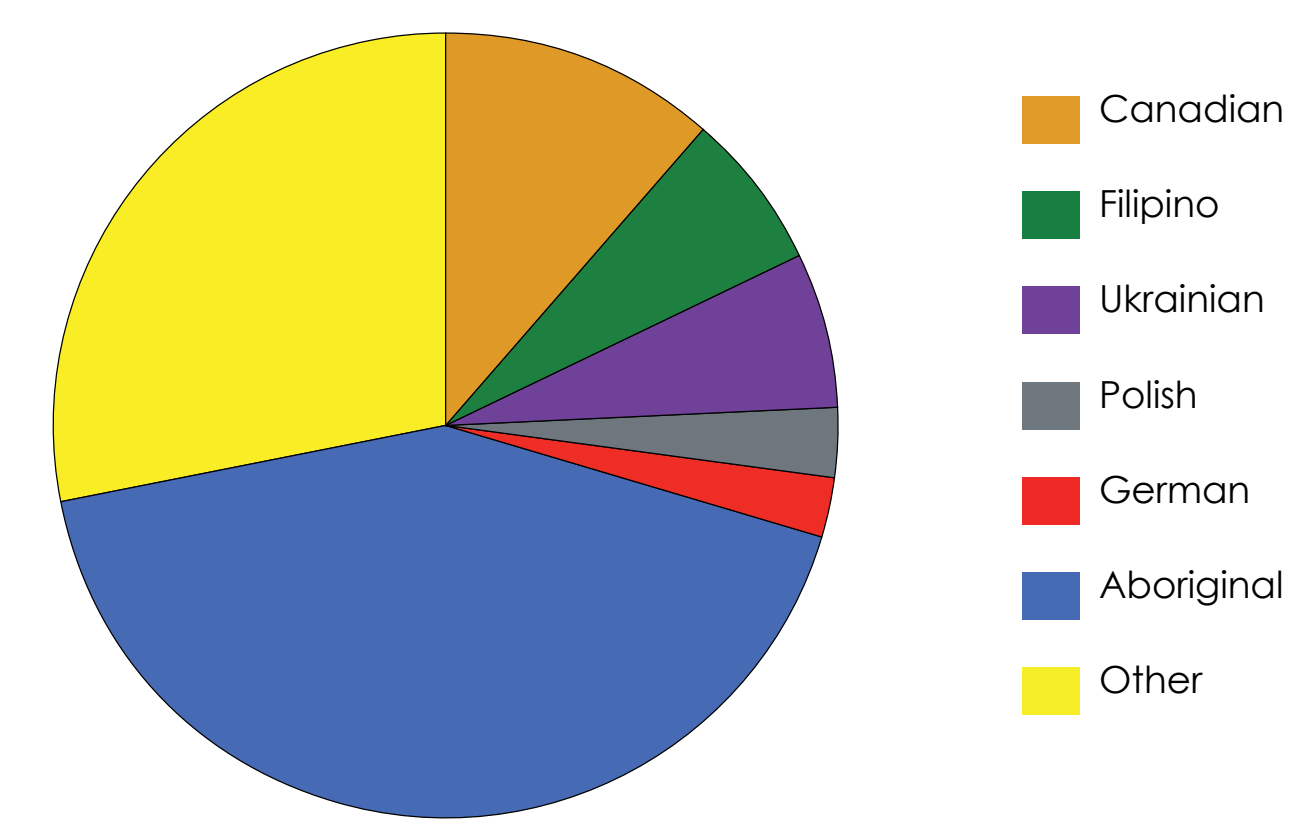
Places of worship demonstrate the diversity of the Area.  
Photo by Erin Ferguson



An example of typical neighbourhood housing. Photo by Erin Ferguson



Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census



Ethnic Composition (single responses)

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census

## Community Information

The Selkirk Avenue Area is comprised of a very diverse population including Aboriginal, Ukrainian, and Filipino people among many others.

A large proportion of people are under the age of 34 and over the age of 55, leaving the area with fewer working-age residents.

Most of the residents living in the area do not own vehicles. 16.5% of residents walk compared to 6.4% in Winnipeg and 27.3% use transit, compared to 14.2% in Winnipeg.

Income is used as an indicator of poverty and disposable income. The average Selkirk Avenue Area resident earns \$14,581 annually, half as much as the average Winnipeg resident.

There is also a high percentage of single parent families in this area (43%) when compared to the rest of Winnipeg (18%), suggesting a need for daycare services.

Area residents appear to be more transient than the average Winnipeg resident. This can be attributed to the poor quality of the housing stock in the Area, and to the high percentage of people who rent their dwellings (73.4%).

Selkirk Avenue Area residents have a lower level of education attainment than Winnipeg. However, educational attendance in the Selkirk Area is high, suggesting that the unique educational opportunities available in the Area are serving the needs of the community (Statistics Canada, City of Winnipeg, 2001).



Urban Circle Training Centre

Photo by Stephanie Whitehouse

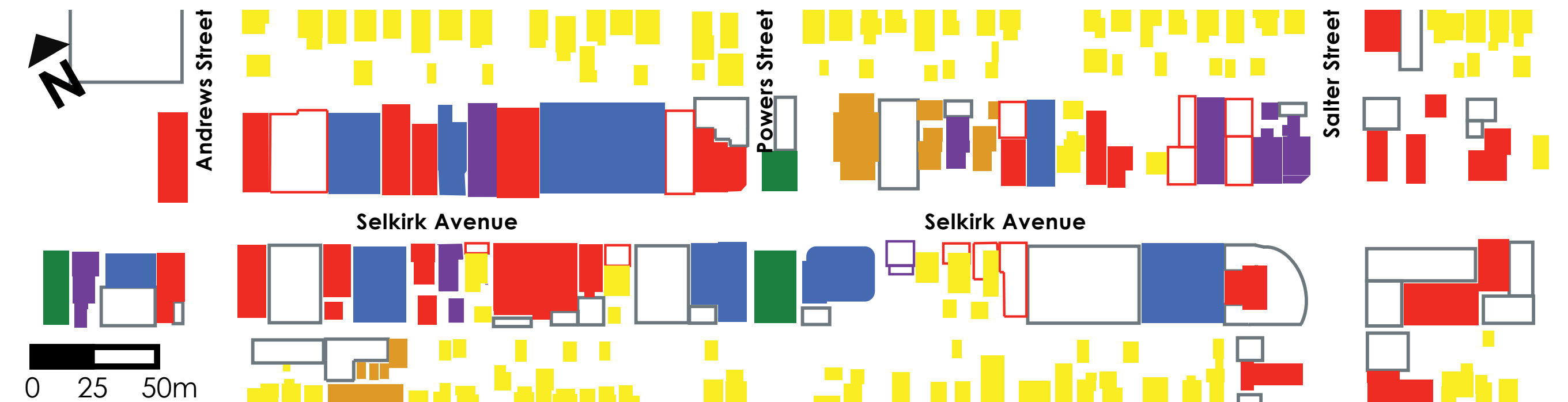


Figure ground drawing of the main street design area highlighting use and built form along the street.

Prepared by Erin Ferguson



## What is a neighbourhood main street?

A neighbourhood main street is a destination with a unique identity, activity, and excitement. Its mix of housing, local shops, services, and open space encourage people to interact and serves the needs of local residents while attracting the broader community.

"A neighbourhood main street should have lots of stores and people walking about."

- interviewee

## Is Selkirk Avenue a neighbourhood main street?

Selkirk Avenue is viewed as a neighbourhood main street in transition. It has a great history but has suffered decline as people and businesses left the area. Many elements of a great main street remain and Selkirk Avenue has the potential to regain its vibrancy and re-emerge as the focal point of the community.

"It has a tremendous amount of potential to carve out a unique sense of identity, but there are still boarded up businesses"

- interviewee

### Interviews

As a first step in our attempt to get a grasp of the issues facing the Selkirk Area from the standpoint of the community, a series of twelve interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders. This group consisted of business owners, social service providers, community members, and government officials.

The interviews attempted to gauge the opinions of the stakeholders towards the Selkirk Avenue Area – and towards Selkirk Avenue in particular – with a view to gaining insight into the challenges and opportunities present as well as the potential for the future of the area. A wide range of issues was raised and these opinions were critical in enabling the development of the proposed design and planning solutions.



The Palace Theatre on Selkirk Avenue in a 1950 painting by A.J. Paquette



The Palace Theatre on Selkirk Avenue Photo by Matthew Fitzgerald

## Selkirk Avenue as a neighbourhood main street

### Built Form

Buildings along Selkirk Avenue represent a diverse mix, both functionally and aesthetically. Commercial uses are interspersed with residential uses and newer designs sit among the old. The built form also reflects the cultural diversity of the neighbourhood. Commercial buildings are mostly one to two storeys, with older ones being brick and newer ones stucco. The residential buildings are mostly single-family houses.

### Pedestrian Realm

Selkirk Avenue has a pedestrian environment with great potential. The sidewalks are relatively wide and a lane of parking on either side of the street separates traffic from the sidewalk, lending an increased sense of safety. Crossing Selkirk Avenue can be a challenge as there are few pedestrian-controlled crosswalks with lights. The pedestrian environment is enhanced by the consistent street wall. There are, however, a number of unoccupied buildings and surface parking lots that detract from the street wall's continuity.

### Function

Selkirk Avenue offers a wide variety of services, despite many unoccupied buildings. These functions include employment and educational training, commercial establishments, and social services. There are also public spaces including the amphitheatre at Powers Street and a community garden.



Awnings overhang the sidewalk Photo by Reuben Koole



Locally-owned restaurant with apartments above Photo by Shelagh Graham



Buildings form a wall along the street Photo by Quincy Brown



Street furnishings Photos by (clockwise from top left) Dave Marshall, Cara Burbridge, Cara Burbridge, Quincy Brown

### Neighbourhood Comparison

Winnipeg has several great neighbourhood main streets, each with its own unique flair. The relationship of the building to the street, storefront appearance, and street furniture all contribute to a vibrant, pedestrian friendly environment encouraging people to walk, shop, and mingle.

A good street line has building fronts adjacent to the sidewalk, and in close proximity to one another.

Storefront appearance can be enhanced through awnings and fresh paint. Signs that are perpendicular to the street can be read by pedestrians as they walk.

Street furniture such as street lamps and planters offer opportunities for artistic flair, a distinct sense of place, and expression of local history. Benches and bike racks would encourage mingling and alternative modes of transportation.



Pedestrian environment along Selkirk Avenue Photo by Erin Ferguson



## SWOT Analysis

Questions in the stakeholder interviews asked about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Selkirk Avenue Area. Key issues that were identified by the interviewees were compiled into a summarized list.

## Strengths

- Engaged, active community
- Unique educational opportunities
- Affordable buildings and housing
- Walkability
- Cultural diversity

## Weaknesses

- Feels unsafe (Merchant Hotel)
- Vacancies and slum landlords
- Parking challenges
- Lack of affordable housing
- Housing stock in poor condition
- Lack of cooperation between services
- Poverty and issues of poverty

## Opportunities

- Strong Aboriginal population
- Underdeveloped, relatively inexpensive land
- Mixed use buildings
- Homeownership
- Local community-driven initiatives
- People take pride in Selkirk Avenue
- Close to the downtown

## Threats

- Racism and Prejudice
- Gang violence
- Substance abuse and dealing
- Current zoning
- Agency funding not guaranteed
- Prostitution and sexual exploitation
- Big box store development



Three of the community's favourite things about Selkirk Avenue  
Photos by (clockwise from top right) David Danyluk, Allan Artibise, Dave Danyluk



Community members participate in visual preference survey  
Photo by Stephanie Whitehouse

## Community Meeting

On November 29th 2006, a community meeting was held at the offices of North End Community Renewal Corporation to gain insight and feedback for the neighbourhood main street design proposals. Participants from the City of Winnipeg, local agencies, and community residents were first asked to identify their three favourite things about Selkirk Avenue. A brief presentation introduced the project and summarized the work completed to date.

Participants then collectively conducted a SWOT analysis to initiate the design game. In the design game, participants proposed student and affordable housing, commercial space including a grocery store, and increased green space on Selkirk Avenue between Salter Street and McGregor Street.

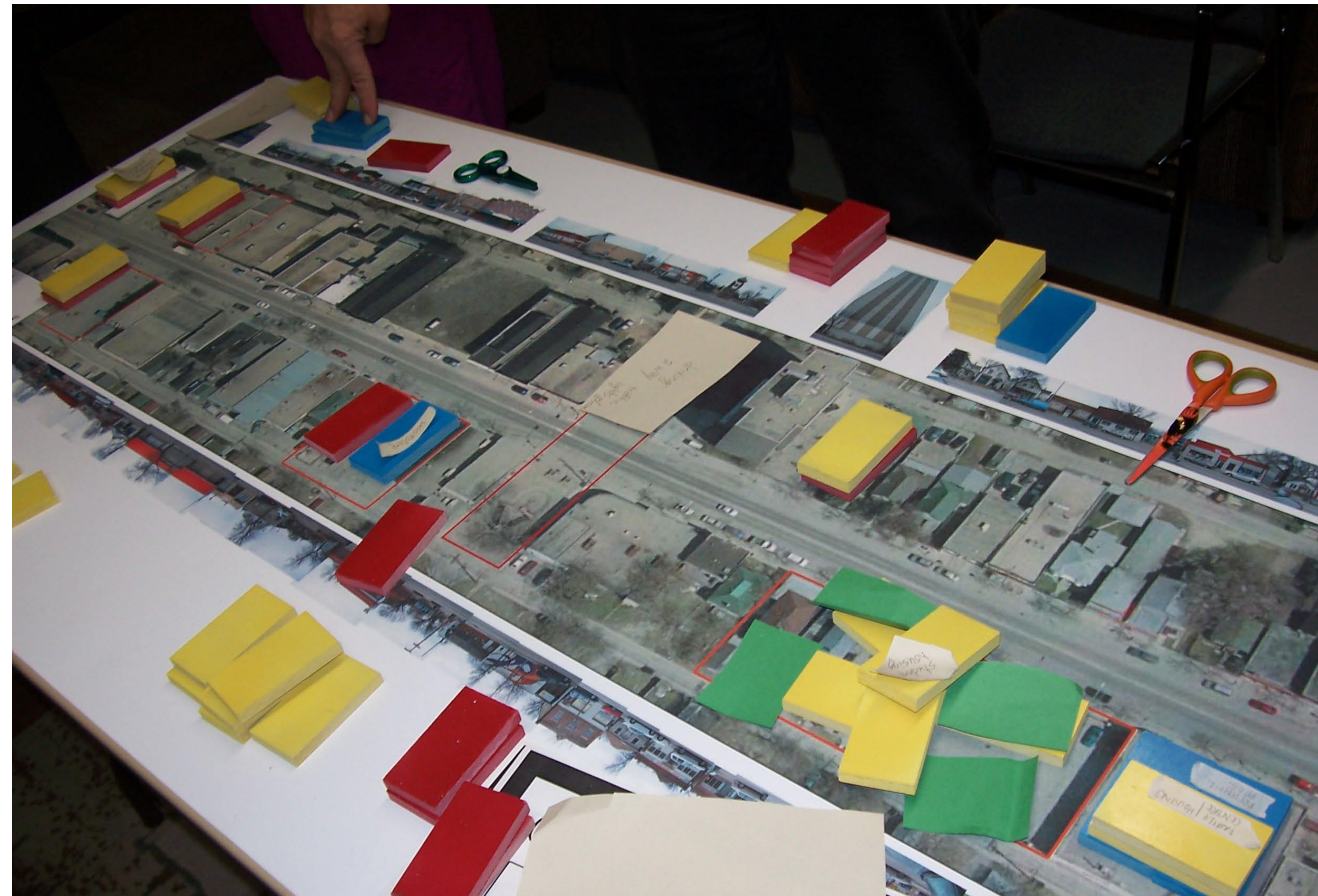
Following the design game, several design proposals were introduced and participants were asked to evaluate the built form of each.



Community meeting participants discuss issues in brainstorming session  
Photo by Cara Burbridge



Community members participate in the design game  
Photo by Stephanie Whitehouse



Results of community member participation in the design game  
Photo by Cara Burbridge

# Selkirk Avenue can reclaim its role as a vibrant, sustainable, and safe neighbourhood main street, that serves the needs of local residents and visitors alike.

## Goals, Objectives, Strategies

Working with issues highlighted through the SWOT analysis, and incorporating feedback from community members and key stakeholders, a series of goals was developed. These should be considered in any future design proposal.

### Goal 1: Maintain Character of the Area

#### Objectives:

- Preserve the typical built form of 1-3 storey mixed-use buildings
- Reflect the cultural diversity and history of the area

#### Strategies:

- Renovate existing buildings
- Facilitate mixed-use zoning
- Promote local history by integrating historical photos and artwork into public spaces

### Goal 2: Promote Local Business Growth

#### Objectives:

- Increase commercial activity on Selkirk Avenue
- Encourage a diversity of businesses (especially a grocery store)

#### Strategies:

- Tax incentives
- Storefront enhancement program
- Parking strategy

### Goal 3: Encourage Vibrant Street Activity

#### Objectives:

- Improve safety and increase perception of safety
- Enhance walkability of the area
- Attract people of all ages and cultures

#### Strategies:

- Provide "eyes on the street" with benches, patios and balconies
- Increase number of pedestrian crossings
- Provide open space and promote local festivals and markets



## Design Proposals

In response to the information gathered from the stakeholder interviews and the community meeting, six designs are represented here. Currently vacant sites were selected for redevelopment proposals. They are attempts, refined through community feedback, to address some of the issues raised by community members.

Built form can encourage positive interaction between people, buildings and the street.



Design proposal sites along Selkirk Avenue between Andrews Street and Salter Street

Prepared by Reuben Koole & Erin Ferguson



Site 1

Modeled by James Moore



Elevation perspective. North side of Selkirk Avenue from Andrews Street to Salter Street. Proposals are illustrated in colour.

Modeled by James Moore



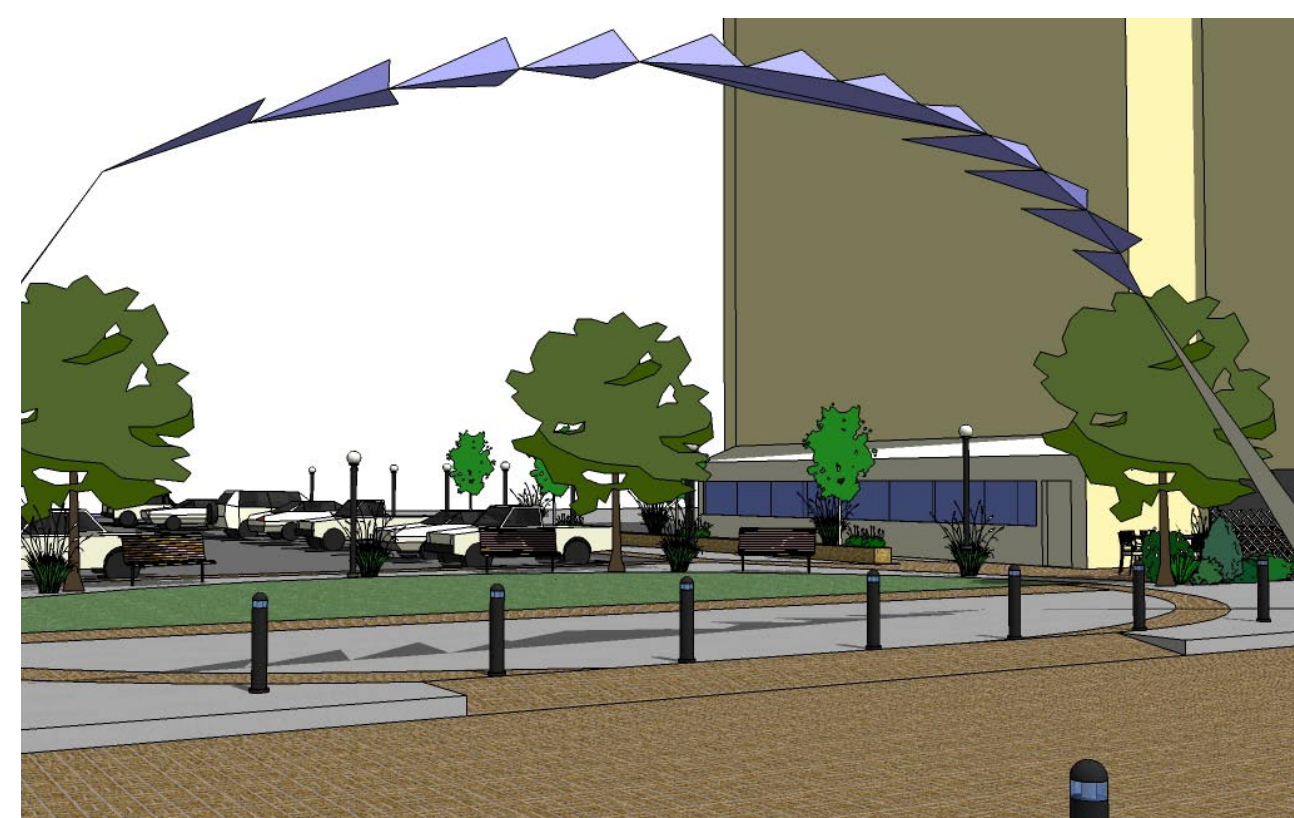
Site 3

Modeled by James Moore



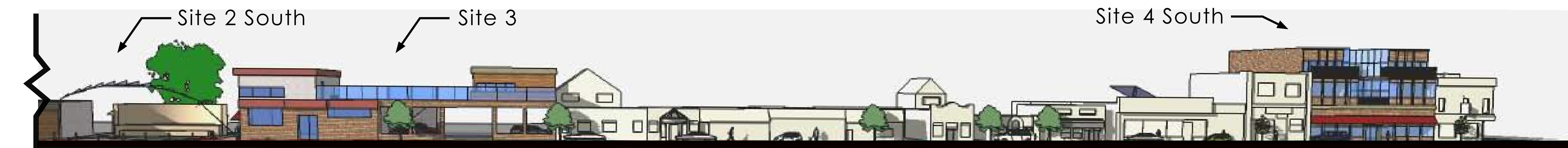
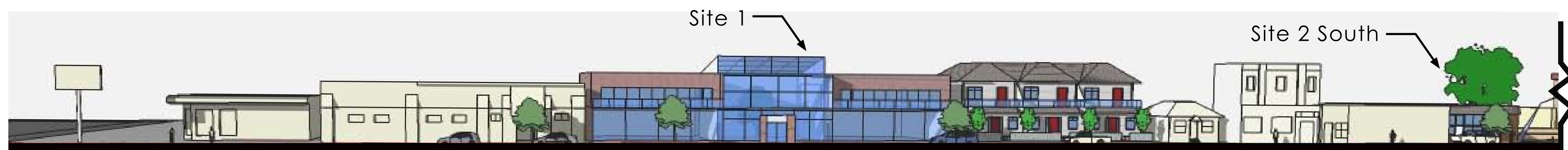
Site 4 North

Modeled by James Moore



Site 2 North

Modeled by James Moore



Elevation perspective. South side of Selkirk Avenue from Salter Street to Andrews Street. Proposals are illustrated in colour.

Modeled by Matthew Fitzgerald & James Moore



Site 4 South

Modeled by James Moore



Site 2 South

Modeled by James Moore

## Site 1

The design for this site depicts a modern-style building featuring a daycare and a senior's centre. The adjacent structure has been designed as six units of affordable, student housing. With their own entrances, gardens, and private balconies looking onto the street, these units are designed to convey the feeling of separate homes, while maintaining the advantages of attached units.

## Site 2

Although this site is divided by Selkirk Avenue, it has been designed as one continuous space, with the north side featuring public green space and improved lighting and landscaping. It is connected to the south side through an enhanced pedestrian corridor and the use of common materials, as well as unique arches. The south side includes a larger amphitheatre and warmer, more user-friendly materials.

## Site 3

The proposal for this site has attempted, with the use of design, to solve some of the problems associated with open parking lots. The creation of a parking structure on the site maintains the street line, while allowing a safe view of the parked cars. Added retail space and a rooftop garden are provided above the structure in order to maximize the use of space.

## Site 4

The proposal for the south side of this site encourages densification by adding both ground floor commercial space and loft-style residential above. By setting back the top floor, the building feels smaller at street level. The north side is a low-cost alternative that provides needed services on Selkirk Avenue, such as a café/deli and a locally owned grocery store. A patio encourages interaction with passers by.

December 8, 2006  
Design Team: Cara Burbridge, Erin Ferguson, Shelagh Graham, Reuben Koole, James Moore