



**STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
FOR THE MEETING OF OCTOBER 12, 2021**

**DATE:** October 6, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Summary Report for "Imagine It", Phase 1 of the Midland City Modern Master Plan

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**Public Input Survey Overview**

This phase of City Modern included four (4) public input surveys via E-City Hall. Prior to this, there were two (2) related surveys (also E-City Hall) for the Parks Master Plan. In total there were 2,553 participants for a total of 128 hours of public comment.

**Public Input Survey #1: Master Plan Focus**

This survey asked very subjective questions in line with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis. Staff grouped responses into the three areas of the Master Plan. They are as follows.

**Neighborhoods + Livability:**

- District/Corridor Development*
- Equitable development*
- Economic development, business & talent attraction, and small business development*
- Park Improvements*
- Activities/Social Opportunities*
- Quality of Life*
- Added mixture of uses in neighborhoods*

**Transportation +Mobility:**

- Infrastructure maintenance and long term sustainability challenges*
- Lop-sided or unequal development across the city*
- Improved connectivity/access*
- Equitable or complete streets*
- Improved multi-modal access*

**Sustainability + Resiliency:**

- Long term sustainability of infrastructure*
- Flood mitigation and resiliency*
- Sewer improvements*
- Improved environmental/green efforts*
- Maintaining parks and open spaces*

**Public Input Survey #2: Transportation + Mobility**

This survey asked specific questions about transportation preferences and impediments to choosing alternative modes of transportation. It came as no surprise that respondents primarily use their personal automobile to get from place to place. That said, 64% will walk to destinations and 34% will bike to destinations. Respondents cited the ease of getting to destinations in the city when driving and that traffic is almost never an issue. The response is different when asking questions about biking and walking. Most cited safety, weather, insufficient infrastructure/conditions, or distance to destination as the reason they primarily use a car.

Respondents prioritized the following relating to transportation and mobility

- 1) Improving the sidewalks and path networks by widening sidewalks and ensuring there is a continuous pathways;
- 2) Improving vehicle traffic flows on main roads; and

- 3) Providing a balance transportation system for all modes.

### **Public Input Survey #3: Neighborhoods + Livability**

This survey asked specific questions about neighborhood satisfaction related to the neighborhood as a whole, social cohesion, and nearby amenities. While most respondents had lived in their neighborhood less than 10 years, most planned to stay there at least another 5 years. Nearly half of the respondents said they know their neighbors while over half felt their neighborhood has a strong sense of community despite 82% not participating in neighborhood events or activities. Staff believes this is due to a lack of opportunity. In speaking with community members it is uncommon for neighborhoods in Midland to have regular meetings or annual events.

When considering neighborhood amenities, 62% felt that their neighborhood has the right amount of nearby amenities. That said, 69% indicated there are too few small businesses near their neighborhood. Finally, 21% of respondents plan to leave Midland in the next five (5) years, and 57% of respondents are unsure if they will stay in Midland beyond 5 years.

### **Public Input Survey #4: Neighborhood Names**

The final survey in this phase was to gain feedback on proposed neighborhood names. Having neighborhood identification names is critical to subarea planning and to place-based planning efforts. Staff identified 37 neighborhoods using the Next Door app and having discussions with City staff who work in areas of the organization that connect closely with residents and neighborhoods. Of the 37 neighborhoods 13 neighborhoods received comments regarding possible revisions. These comments fell into two categories: boundary adjustment, and alternative names. Staff will be presenting the results of this survey at a later date.

### **“Midland Moves” Events**

These events were designed to be 1/2-3/4 mile walks through sections of neighborhoods in the city. The purpose of these events is quite simple. When you drive through an area in a car, your experience and observations are very different compared to when you are traveling on foot. Walking is naturally slower and allows the participant to look at the built environment and neighborhoods in general from a more granular viewpoint. During the “Imagine It” phase, staff held five (5) Midland Moves events throughout the city. Our final event, a hybrid event using DART vehicles to get to key destinations in the Bay City Road Corridor, was cancelled due to a lack of participants. Average attendance was 15 people. Each event saw a mix of families, seniors, and young adults.

Throughout the events, we saw a theme in participant comments and observations. A summary of those comments follows.

- Busier roads and intersections didn't feel safe for pedestrians or cyclists.
- Speed, inadequate crossing times, inadequate street lighting, and car noise were some of the comments related to safety.
- Streets that are 45mph felt the least safe. They also felt less attractive in terms of quality of life.
- Parks are very well maintained in the city.
- Some parks, such as Crane Park, could use additional seating.
- Sidewalks were not wide enough in most areas. Participants struggled to walk side by side in pairs and stay on the sidewalk.
- Some participants chose their home based on the neighborhood and its amenities, such as Plymouth Park.
- Some areas of the city have little-to-no street lighting, relying on headlights from cars to provide visibility at night.
- Bike paths and non-motorized connectors are popular.
- Streets with well-maintained street trees were the most popular for walking.
- Some streets feel too wide for two-lane roads and contributed to reckless driving, as observed by neighbors.
- Fencing in the playgrounds at parks would make parents with younger children feel more safe and relaxed.
- There is a desire to see neighborhoods become more unique and have their own flavor.
- There is a desire to see more small businesses and unique restaurants in the city.

## **Stakeholder Meetings**

25 different stakeholder categories were identified in the City Modern Public Participation Plan. To date, staff have met with 23 different groups or City departments. Additional stakeholder meetings will be scheduled as further phases of the planning process continue.

## **Website**

The Midland City Modern website launched in April of 2021. The site serves two main purposes:

1. A hub for updates as the master planning process moves forward.
2. An archival record available for stakeholders so that they may quickly get up to speed on the plan and be able to more fully participate in the planning process.

To date, there have been over 1,000 unique visitors to the website.

## **Newsletter**

The City Modern newsletter launched in July of 2021. The newsletter includes a mix of information including information about the City Modern planning process and opportunities to participate. Additionally, the newsletter has fun facts about urban planning, links to resources such as videos, articles, and podcasts that help stakeholders become more familiar with the world of urban planning.

## **Next Steps & Planning Commission Action**

The next phase of City Modern is the “Plan It” phase where we will be asking the community to dive deeper into topics that have been identified so far in the process. Staff is looking for guidance from the Planning Commission to take the information gathered during the first phase and to shorten it into specific topics that can be fit within the three focus areas: Neighborhoods & Livability, Transportation & Mobility, and Sustainability & Resiliency.

Staff will present this report at the meeting on October 12, 2021 and will ask for deliberation on this after the presentation. If additional conversation is required, or if additional engagement from other community groups is requested, staff will work to schedule that for the October 26, 2021 meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,



Grant Murschel  
Director of Planning & Community Development