

Community Engagement Report: Town Center Master Plan Update

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Release Date: October 2, 2023



Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the City of Rockville Department of Community Planning and Development Services, Comprehensive Planning Division. Internal assistance was provided by the Department of Public Works, Department of Recreation and Parks, City Manager's Office, and Rockville Economic Development, Inc.

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Executive Summary

The Department of Community Planning and Development Services for the City of Rockville is pleased to present its Community Engagement Report on the Town Center Master Plan Update project.

This report summarizes all activities performed by staff throughout the outreach and engagement phase of the Town Center Master Plan update project. The report provides insight into the methods of outreach, shares findings received from each outreach method, and details several key takeaways and major themes that will need to be addressed in the update to the Town Center Master Plan. The Community Engagement Report itself does not make any recommendations, but rather shares findings and popular topics of discussion to date. Ultimately, the final version of the Community Engagement Report will become an appendix to the updated Master Plan.

Engagement Opportunities and Participation Metrics

Staff utilized 10 different methods to collect feedback from the public during the outreach and engagement phase. Given how data was collected, it is hard to tell exactly how many unique individuals interacted with staff during the outreach and engagement phase. Anecdotally, staff is aware of many individuals who provided feedback through multiple avenues. That said, staff confidently believes more than 1,000 unique individuals have participated in at least one method of providing feedback during this process. The table below outlines the major outreach efforts undertaken by staff and their associated participation metric(s).

Methodology	Participation Metric
Kickoff Listening Sessions	4 events with 100 total attendees
Tabling at Community Events	12 events with 713 total participants
Focus Groups	13 focus groups with 130 total attendees
Stakeholder Interviews	11 organizations or individuals
City Boards & Commissions	8 boards and commissions
Engage Rockville Survey	752 respondents
Engage Rockville Reaction Map	143 pins from 13 users
Engage Rockville Idea Board	10 ideas from 5 users
Residential Door Hangers	~2,000 distributed
Business Visits	~150 visited

Demographics of Respondents

Ensuring representative feedback is one of nine objectives set forth in the project proposal for the Town Center Master Plan Update. There were two main mechanisms for collecting demographic information throughout the outreach and engagement phase: demographic request forms completed at the kickoff listening sessions and a demographic page on the Engage Rockville survey.

The demographic information gathered from both methodologies was similar. Generally, those who provided feedback are primarily Rockville residents, though most participants did not actually live within the boundaries of the Town Center planning area. There was a fairly even age distribution that is generally reflective of both Rockville and Town Center's age demographics. There are two specific areas of note where the demographics of those who provided feedback do not align with demographics of Town Center of the City as a whole. There was an overrepresentation of females in this process, as well as an overrepresentation of people who identify as white. Since these demographics are not truly representative of Rockville or Town Center, the survey results should be reviewed with that in mind.

Major Takeaways and Themes

Through the outreach and engagement period, several themes emerged. These themes continued to repeat in conversations across multiple groups and through different engagement methodologies. Major takeaways and themes gathered through this phase include:

- Land Use and Housing
 - Desire to see more density, particularly in the form of housing.
 - The increasing need for affordable housing.
- Business and Economic Development
 - Desire to see fewer retail vacancies.
 - Desire for more diversity in retail options, especially more retailers that don't involve dining.
 - Tentative interest in an entity of some sort to support Town Center.
- Transportation
 - Desire for more and improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
 - Need for improved wayfinding signage for pedestrians and vehicles.
 - Desire to see improvements to signage and accessibility of existing parking garages.
 - Tentative interest in closing additional streets to vehicles and making them pedestrian only (example: Gibbs Street).
- Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities
 - Desire to see more parks and additional greenspace, including landscaping and streetscapes.
 - Desire for more events in Town Center.

- Desire to see improvements to Promenade Park, enhancing the connection to the pedestrian bridge to Metro.

Ultimately, the updated Master Plan should address each of these takeaways in some way.

Introduction

In January 2023, Community Planning and Development Services (CPDS) staff received instruction from the Rockville Mayor and Council to embark on an update to the *2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan*. As Town Center has shifted from a traditional, enclosed shopping mall to a mixed-use destination there has been much progress, yet there are still challenges that must be addressed. The Rockville Town Center Master Plan Update (“Update”) will seek to build on Town Center’s strengths and position the planning area for decades of prosperity and vitality.

The purpose of this Public Engagement Report is to report on the process for soliciting community feedback on Town Center and the master plan Update, as well as to summarize findings gathered during the outreach process that lasted from April through September 2023. This document does not make any recommendations regarding Town Center, nor does it represent the City’s thoughts and feelings on the planning area. Instead, this report shares what the community has reported to staff, and identifies several recurring themes and ideas generated throughout this phase of the project.

The information contained within this report will be used in the development of the Town Center Master Plan Update that is envisioned to be released to the public in early 2024.

The Need for an Update

The current *Rockville Town Center Master Plan* was adopted by Mayor and Council in October 2001. Despite being more than 20 years old, this is the most recent area master plan. In the subsequent two decades since plan adoption, Town Center has evolved into a mixed-used destination and job center for the City. However, due to increasing regional competition and an ever-changing retail and office market, Town Center faces a number of challenges. Via an updated master plan, recommended actions will be developed to help guide and direct Town Center’s success in the coming decades.

Since the creation of the *2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan*, Rockville has adopted additional city-wide goals, policies, and initiatives. These include Vision Zero initiatives to end traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030, goals to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, housing production goals to develop more than 1,000 new residential units in Rockville, and to further racial equity and social justice. An update to the master plan will bring Town Center further into alignment with these important goals.

Most recently, in August 2021, the Mayor and Council adopted *Rockville 2040: Comprehensive Plan of the City of Rockville, Maryland* (Comprehensive Plan). The Comprehensive Plan makes several recommendations for City land use, policies, and projects. Within the document, an entire chapter is dedicated to the Rockville Town Center planning area. While elements of the Comprehensive Plan supersede the *2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan*, this chapter identified City Project 1 as “conduct a planning effort leading to the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan amendment to Planning Area 1 that updates and replaces the 2001 Town Center Master Plan.”

The overarching goal of the master plan update is to strengthen Town Center by creating a cohesive vision for the planning area that meets the City’s goals and provides a clear path for implementation.

Project Phases

The Update process has been divided into several distinct phases to manage workflow and ensure plenty of opportunity for the public to engage in the process. Project phases and their associated proposed timelines for the Update are:

- December 2022 – March 2023 | Project Preparation
- April – September 2023 | Outreach & Engagement
- October 2023 | Release of Public Engagement Report & Comment Period
- October – December 2023 | Plan Drafting
- January – April 2024 | Planning Commission Review, Hearing(s) & Recommendation
- April – June 2024 | Mayor & Council Review & Hearing(s)
- July 2024 | Plan Adopted by Mayor & Council

During the Planning Commission and Mayor and Council review phases there will be multiple opportunities for the public to review and provide comment on the draft plan. These comments will be provided to each respective body accordingly.

Plan Objectives

The project proposal was endorsed by Mayor and Council on January 30, 2023. Endorsement of the project proposal provides direction to staff on the scope of work, project objectives and project timeline. The project proposal for the Update outlined several objectives for the project. The nine endorsed objectives are:

1. Provide an environment conducive to and supportive of living, working and entertainment.
2. Accommodate a variety of densities, scales, uses and typologies of development that are sensitive to an urban neighborhood environment and flexible to the marketplace.
3. Enhance links to public and active transportation options and parking which improve their visibility and accessibility.
4. Provide improved connections from neighborhoods to Town Center.
5. Minimize the divisive impact of Rockville Pike and the Metro/CSX rail lines.
6. Make Town Center a unique, high-amenity destination for local and regional customers.
7. Utilize urban design to establish zoning and density requirements that will assist in defining, placemaking and activating the public realm of Rockville Town Center.
8. Provide an environment that is safe and appealing for pedestrians and bicyclists.

9. Establish Town Center as a welcoming and affordable place for people of all incomes and backgrounds to live.

Furthermore, the project team established four clear principles for community outreach and engagement. These principles guided and steered the direction of the outreach and engagement phase of the update. They are:

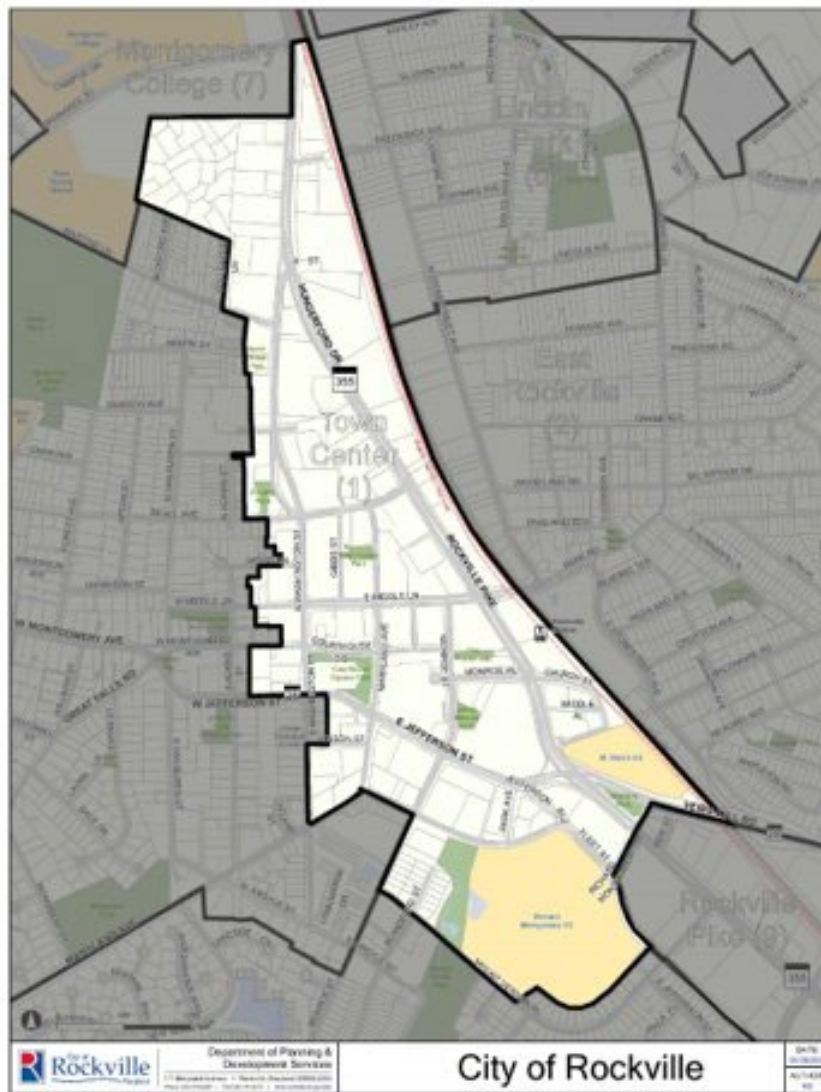
1. Meet people where they are.
2. Ask for clear and specific feedback, as well as provide opportunities for general feedback.
3. Meaningful engagement is ongoing and builds a relationship.
4. Strive for representational engagement and prioritize outreach to often underrepresented segments of the community.

Town Center Geography

As laid out in the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, our city is divided into 17 distinct geographic planning areas. These planning areas group together similar land uses and building character to make concentrated units of geography or districts. The challenges, opportunities, needs, and desires of each of these planning areas vary, and the ultimate goal in the future is that many of these planning areas will have their own master plan, which will be adopted into the Comprehensive Plan through an update to that specific Planning Area chapter.

The Town Center planning area is known as Planning Area 1. Planning Area 1 is bounded by Richard Montgomery High School to the south; by the Metro/CSX tracks to the east; falls just shy of Mannakee Street and Montgomery College to the north; and loosely follows the boundary of N./S. Washington Street to the west. The Rockville Metro station is located within the Town Center boundary, as is the entirety of the Town Square development and many of the Montgomery County government offices and Rockville City Hall.

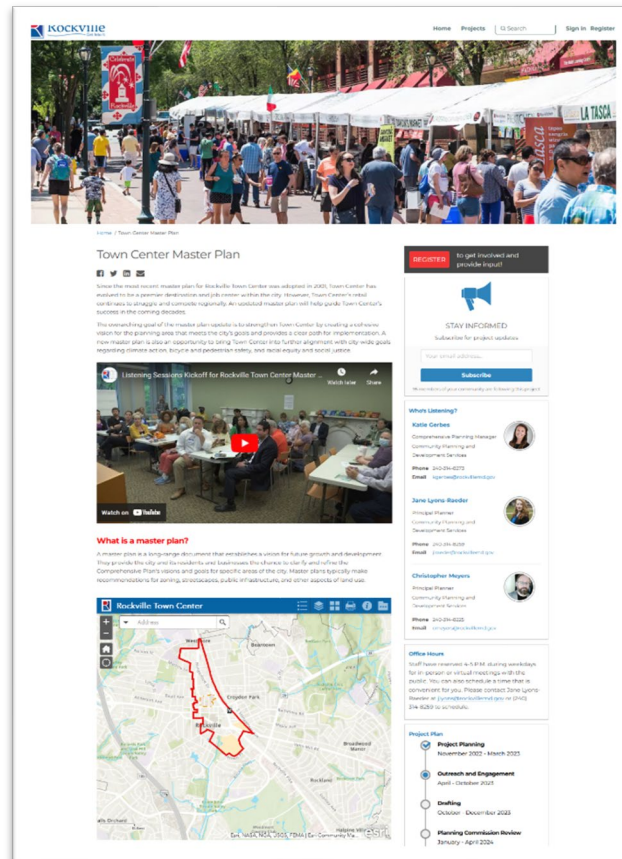
Map 1: Town Center Planning Area Boundary



The feedback provided from the community in this report encapsulates the thoughts, ideas and concerns presented to staff regarding this specific Town Center geography.

Methodology and Process for Getting Feedback

The City utilized a variety of tools during the outreach and engagement phase to gather feedback from the community and visitors to Town Center. This section outlines each of the methodologies and processes used by CPDS during this phase.



A screenshot of Town Center Portal on Engage Rockville.

Engage Rockville Website

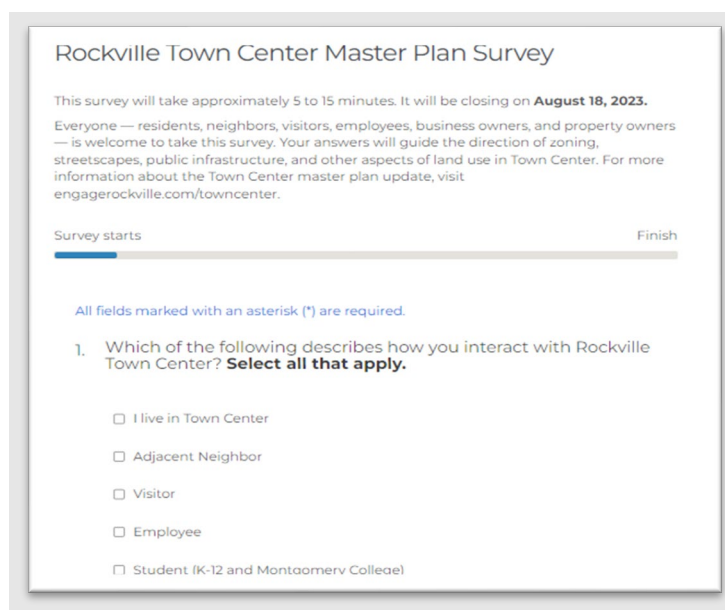
The City of Rockville uses a website known as Engage Rockville as a primary platform for collecting feedback and input from its community. This site enables projects to have their own unique project pages on which residents can stay updated on project progress, provide input via a variety of widgets, and interact directly with staff. The Town Center Master Plan page on Engage Rockville (www.engagerockville.com/towncenter) was designed to be the central hub and repository of information for the public during the Update. The main elements of the website include a project schedule, key dates for public meetings, a library of relevant reports and documents, monthly blog posts hosted in a “news feed,” and contact information for project staff.

During the outreach and engagement phase of the project, staff also added three additional tabs to the Engage Rockville page to solicit feedback: a survey, a reaction map, and an idea board.

Each of these elements of the website were open to the public from March 28, 2023 until August 18, 2023.

Survey

The primary method for collecting feedback on the Engage Rockville site was through the survey. This survey utilized “skip logic” to ask different questions to those taking the survey based on their previous responses. One of the first questions on the survey asked people to indicate how they primarily interact with Rockville Town Center. Possible answers included: I live in Town Center, adjacent neighbor, visitor, employee, student, business owner, government/nonprofit executive, commercial or multifamily property owner. Depending on the response selected by the survey taker, the taker was directed to different set of questions. For example, the questions being asked to people who identify as living in Town Center are slightly different from those who have identified themselves as owning a business in Town Center. The survey allowed people to identify themselves in multiple groups and could respond to multiple “skip logic” sections of the survey.

A screenshot of a web-based survey titled "Rockville Town Center Master Plan Survey". The survey is in English and is intended for residents, neighbors, visitors, employees, business owners, and property owners. It states that the survey will take approximately 5 to 15 minutes and will close on August 18, 2023. The survey is currently open, with a progress bar showing "Survey starts" and "Finish". Below the progress bar, there is a note: "All fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required." The first question is: "1. Which of the following describes how you interact with Rockville Town Center? Select all that apply." The options are: "I live in Town Center", "Adjacent Neighbor", "Visitor", "Employee", and "Student (K-12 and Montomery College)". Each option has a checkbox next to it.

A screenshot of the survey on Engage Rockville.

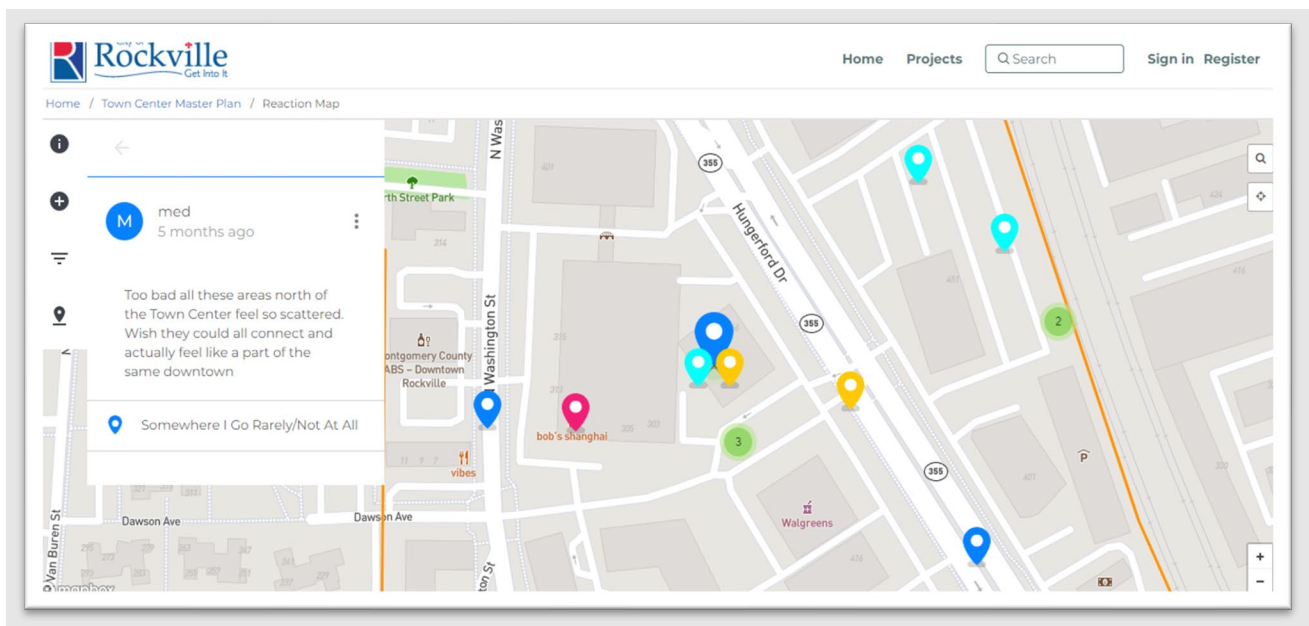
Regardless of a survey taker’s response to the earlier questions, the last page of the survey asked all users to provide demographic information. This section was entirely voluntary, though staff found that approximately 80-99% of survey responses completed this section, depending on the question. The demographic information is important to the City to ensure we are getting representational feedback during this process. Demographic information asked in the survey included:

- Do you live within the City of Rockville?
- What is your home address zip code?
- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- What is your race and ethnicity?
- What are the primary languages spoken in your household?
- What is your total gross household income?

Reaction Map

The reaction map widget provided an opportunity for users of the Engage Rockville site to identify and comment on specific locations in Rockville Town Center by adding "pins" based on the following categories and prompts:

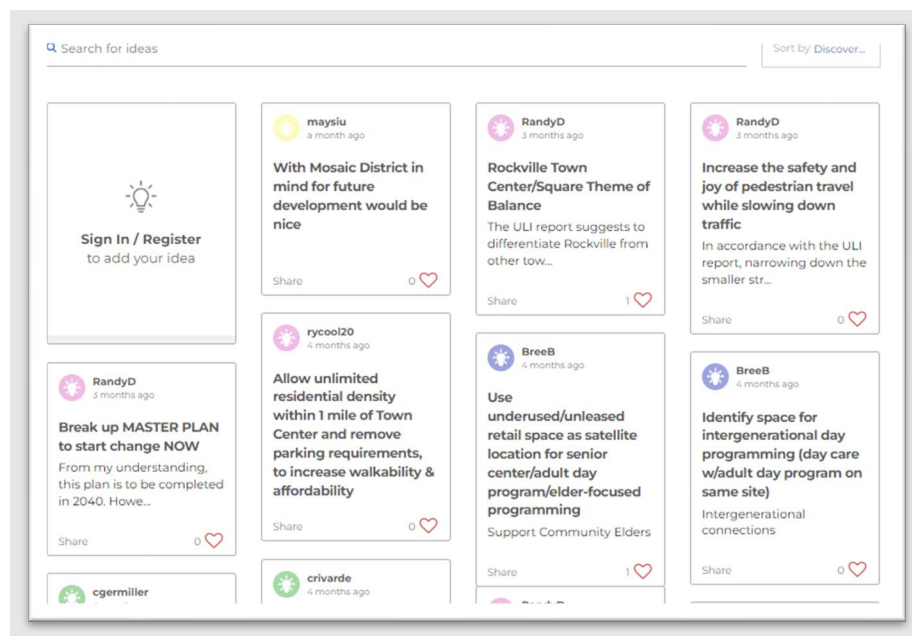
- **Spot I Love** - Where in Town Center do you love? Why do you love this spot? Examples could include Town Square, your favorite shop, or the best place to sit and read a book.
- **Needs Improvement** - Where in Town Center could be better? Examples could include an intersection you don't feel safe crossing or a spot that needs better signage. You can also upload a photo to show us exactly what you're talking about.
- **Somewhere I Go Often** - Where do you go all the time? This might not be a spot you love, but it's a place you need for your daily life. Examples might include a convenience store, bus stop, or grocery store.
- **Somewhere I Go Rarely/Not at All** - Where do you not usually venture in Town Center? This could be because it is not accessible (for example, poor sidewalks) or does not interest you. Include a comment to let us know what might make it easier or more attractive for you to go there.
- **New Ideas/Things I'd Like to See** - Is there something Town Center doesn't have that you wish it did? Examples might include parks/greenspace, bike lanes, murals, or other missing services.
- **Other** - Have something to say that doesn't fit into one of these categories? Use this pin!



A screenshot from the Engage Rockville reaction map feature showing pins of varying colors.

Idea Board

The idea board concept is simple; this widget allowed for users to post their ideas for the future of Town Center and let users “like” or “upvote” one another’s responses.



A screenshot of the idea board on the Engage Rockville site showing tiles of different ideas.

Kickoff Listening Sessions

To publicly kick off the Update process, the City hosted four listening sessions with members of the community in April 2023. Two of these meetings were in-person meetings held at the Rockville Memorial Library, while the other two meetings were held virtually via the Webex meeting platform. Meetings took place on the following dates:

- Thursday, April 13 at the Rockville Memorial Library
- Wednesday, April 19 at the Rockville Memorial Library
- Saturday, April 22 held via Webex
- Tuesday, April 25 held via Webex

Aside from a few small changes to take into consideration the logistics of an in person versus virtual meeting, the listening sessions were identical to one another – the same overview presentation was given at each, and the same exercises were conducted to receive feedback from meeting attendees. At these meetings, attendees were invited to provide insight to the City team in the following ways:

- Contribute to a word cloud by texting their responses to questions to a specified number.
- Select their preference when provided with a series of “this or that” scenario questions.
- Allocate “play” money to different community amenities according to how each amenity is prioritized for each attendee.
- Provide qualitative feedback through a small group mapping exercise.

In total between all four of the listening sessions, a total of 100 individuals attended one or more meetings.



Small group discussions at the April 19, 2023 Listening Session.



Interactive word cloud activity at the April 13, 2023 Listening Session.

Tabling at Community Events

Knowing that only a small segment of the population has the time, interest, and ability to attend a two-hour public meeting, it was important to get input from other folks who experience Town Center in their everyday life outside of a formal meeting setting. To do this, the City set up tables at 12 community events within the Town Center planning area, or nearby, over the course of a 10-week period. Some of these events were large, annual festivals that gather a big crowd; others were smaller, more locally focused events. In total, staff tabled at the following places during this period:

- May 7, 2023 | Rockville Arts Festival
- May 13, 2023 | Rockville Farmer's Market
- May 19, 2023 | Bike to Work Day (two locations in the city)
- May 20, 2023 | Rockville Farmer's Market
- May 27, 2023 | Hometown Holidays
- June 3, 2023 | MoCo Families for Safe Streets Rally
- June 17, 2023 | Rockville Farmer's Market
- June 17, 2023 | Lincoln Park 13th Anniversary & Juneteenth Celebration
- June 17, 2023 | Suds & Soles 5k
- June 24, 2023 | Rockville Farmer's Market
- June 24, 2023 | Rockville Pride
- July 12, 2023 | Senior Housing Expo

The purpose of tabling at community events was twofold. First, the City wanted to promote the Update effort and educate residents and visitors on how to be involved in the process. This was

primarily achieved through the distribution of flyers promoting the project and associated Engage Rockville site, as well as chatting with individuals who stopped by the table at each of these events. Additionally, the City also sought feedback from folks at these events relative to their experiences, desires and wishes for Town Center. At most of the events, the table contained some sort of interactive question or activity for passersby to participate in. These activity boards contained the same questions that were asked of attendees at the four kickoff listening sessions to validate the responses received.

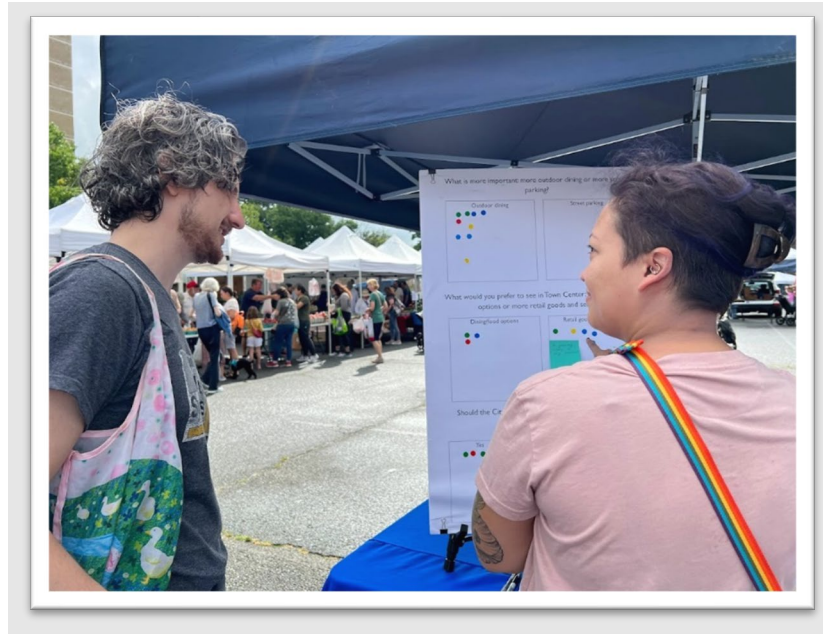
It is challenging to quantify the exact impact and exposure tabling had on this project and its participation rates. There was no mechanism to count the number of people who walked by a table or grabbed a flyer without stopping to participate in activity at the table. That said, staff do have a count of the number of individuals who participated in the activity boards. Table 1, below, lists each event that had an activity board along with the number of participants on the activity board at said event.

Table 1: Tabling Event Dates and Activity Board Responses (if applicable)

Date	Event	Responses
May 7	Arts Festival	204
May 13	Farmer's Market	64
May 19	Bike to Work Day	n/a
May 20	Farmer's Market	29
May 27	Hometown Holidays	188
June 3	Safe Streets Rally	n/a
June 17	Farmer's Market	60
June 17	Lincoln Park Day	n/a
June 17	Suds & Soles 5k	24
June 24	Farmer's Market	60
June 24	Pride	61
July 12	Senior Housing Expo	23



Rockville resident and Maryland State Senator Cheryl Kagan provides feedback on an activity board during Rockville's Pride event.



Two residents contemplate their responses to the activity board at the June 24 Farmer's Market.



The project team's table at the Rockville Arts Festival.

Focus Group Roundtables

With a stated engagement goal of representative participation, staff held 13 focus group roundtables to ensure participation in the Update. These roundtables targeted often underrepresented groups in public engagement processes, as well as specific groups of stakeholders that are likely to have a very distinct point of view and unique insight into the challenges and opportunities within Town Center that hadn't already been expressed during the outreach and engagement phase.

The roundtables were curated to remain small and intimate, as one purpose of the roundtables was to spotlight voices that haven't been heard. While all roundtables were open to the public, they weren't heavily advertised to keep the group size small enough to enable robust discussion. Often upon the initial invitation to participate in a roundtable, guests informed staff of additional individuals who should be involved in the effort. Attendance at roundtables varied based on the focus group, but often included a combination of individuals representing their own interests who met the focus group criteria and organizations that work in the space/represent individuals in the focus group criteria.

Table 2 lists the roundtables that were hosted during this phase.

Table 2: Roundtable Meeting Dates & Attendees

Focus Group	Date	Number of Attendees
Faith Based Community	July 11, 2023	4
Adjacent Communities	July 12, 2023	5
Affordable Housing Nonprofits & Developers	July 19, 2023	6
Senior Citizens	July 20, 2023	18
BLVD Ansel Apartment Building	July 24, 2023	9
Black and African American Community	July 25, 2023	7
Asian American and Pacific Islander Community	July 26, 2023	3
Property Owners and Developers	July 27, 2023	12
Latino Community	August 3, 2023	12
Individuals with Disabilities	August 9, 2023	24
BLVD 44 Apartment Building	August 17, 2023	10
Arts Community	August 23, 2023	17
LGBTQIA+ Community	August 30, 2023	3

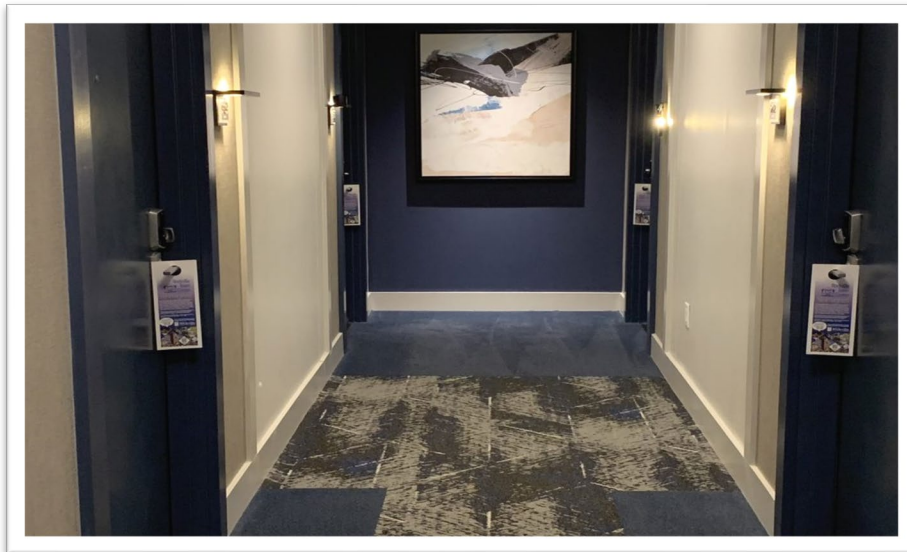
Discussions with Businesses

A critical voice in the outreach and engagement process that staff did not hear much from initially was the small business community – folks who own businesses located in Town Center or employees of businesses/organizations within Town Center planning area. Given that Town Center is an economic engine for the City, it was imperative to talk to these stakeholders.

To solicit feedback from these stakeholders, staff created an online business community survey and accompanying flyer. Business owners as well as employees were invited to participate. Staff canvased the Town Center by going door-to-door and distributed flyers to each business visited. Staff stopped at nearly 150 businesses.

Residential Door Hanging

The Town Center planning area is primarily made up of renters – nearly 75% of residents within the area rent their home. Historically renter populations have a less than representative turn out to public meetings when compared to homeowners. To combat this trend and ensure Town Center’s rental population was fully aware of the Update and opportunities for input, City staff set out to place informational door hangers on the doors of residences in the area. Over the course of three days City staff visited nearly every residential address within the Town Center planning area. All single family detached and townhouse units within the planning area received a door hanger. For the multifamily buildings, staff worked closely with building management to distribute the door hangers. Most buildings allowed staff to go door to door and physically place a hanger on each front door. A handful of other buildings would not allow staff access to the entire building or complex, but instead allowed a stack of door hangers to be left in communal spaces such as mailrooms and lobbies. In total, nearly 2,000 door hangers were distributed throughout the planning area.



Informational door hangers left for residents in an apartment building.

Stakeholder Interviews

Throughout the entire public engagement process, staff offered the opportunity to meet one on one with individuals or organizations to provide feedback into the Update process. The opportunity for stakeholder interviews was advertised on the Engage Rockville website, at all public meetings and roundtables, as well as in email correspondence with stakeholders throughout the planning process.

Staff created a robust list of stakeholders the included more than 200 contacts. All contacts were emailed at least twice during the public outreach process to solicit feedback. Some of these groups took staff up on the offer to participate in an interview, while others attended relevant roundtables. Further, some contacts chose not to directly provide feedback, but shared the opportunity to provide input to their networks.

Table 3: Stakeholder List Summary

Category	Number of Contacts
Residential Complexes	21
Commercial Properties	19
Nonprofit and Public Sector Organizations	69
Civic Associations	24
City Boards & Commissions	25
Businesses	44

In total, staff completed 12 stakeholder interviews. These included:

- Action Committee for Transit
- College Living Experience
- Greater Rockville Chamber of Commerce Public Policy Committee
- Federal Railway Administration
- Main Street Connect’s “Food for Thought” Program
- Maryland State Highway Administration, District 3 Traffic Office
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- Richard Montgomery High School Student Government Association
- Rockville Housing Enterprises Board of Directors
- Thomas S. Wootton High School Student Government Association
- Washington Area Bicyclists Association
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

City Boards, Commissions, and Task Forces

The City of Rockville has 25 boards, commissions, and task forces that consist of appointed representatives charged with studying, advising, or making recommendations on a variety of topic areas to staff and the Mayor and Council. Staff reached out to each of these bodies with an invitation for staff to attend a meeting to provide an overview of the Update project and solicit feedback from members. In total, staff met with eight boards and commissions, as outlined in Table 4. Staff met with some of these groups once, while others invited staff to multiple meetings to continue discussion.

Table 4: Boards, Commissions and Task Force Dates

Board/Commission	Initial Meeting Date
Asian Pacific American Task Force	May 2, 2023
Bicycle Advisory Committee	May 3, 2023
Environmental Commission	September 7, 2023
Historic District Commission	May 18, 2023
Human Rights Commission	April 26, 2023
Pedestrian Advisory Committee	May 11, 2023
Recreation and Parks Advisory Board	July 27, 2023
Transportation and Mobility Committee	March 28, 2023

There was not a specific briefing to the Planning Commission during the outreach and engagement phase like there was for other boards, commissions, and task forces. As the land use body in Rockville, the Planning Commission received a briefing and provided input into the project proposal in early 2023. The Planning Commission will continue to get regular updates throughout the project, ultimately leading up to a dedicated phase of the project for Planning Commission review, public hearing(s), and recommendation.

Who We Heard From

The two mechanisms for collecting demographic information throughout the outreach and engagement phase were the optional demographic requests presented at the kickoff listening sessions and through the survey on Engage Rockville. Detailed demographic information from participants in each of those groups is provided in this section.

Listening Session Demographics

A total of 100 individuals attended one of the four kickoff listening sessions. During the listening session, attendees were encouraged to self-report their demographic information. 88% of attendees lived within the City of Rockville, and 31% of those individuals reside within the boundaries of Town Center. Age distribution of kickoff listening session participants is fairly evenly split among several different age bands: 16% were between 25 – 34; 23% between 35 – 44, 16% between 45 – 54; 13% between 54-64; and 31% over 65. The largest share (49%) of attendees have lived in their current residence for less than five years, though 46% have lived there more than 10 years. Listening session attendees were overwhelmingly white (84%), with only 4% of attendees identifying as Black or African American, Asian and Pacific Islander and Other.

Figure 1: Do you live in Rockville?

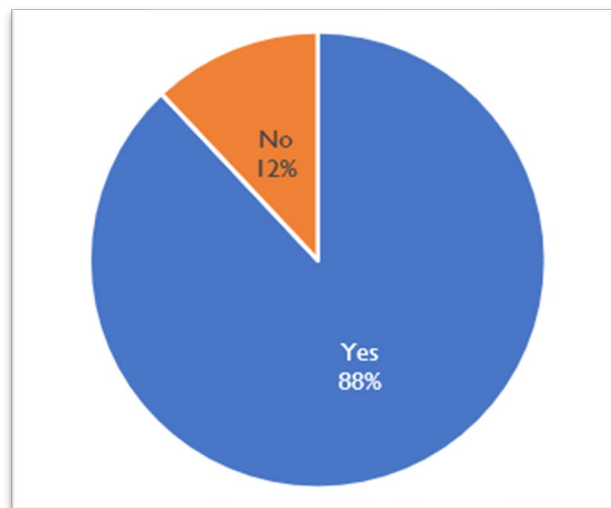


Figure 2: Are you a Town Center resident?

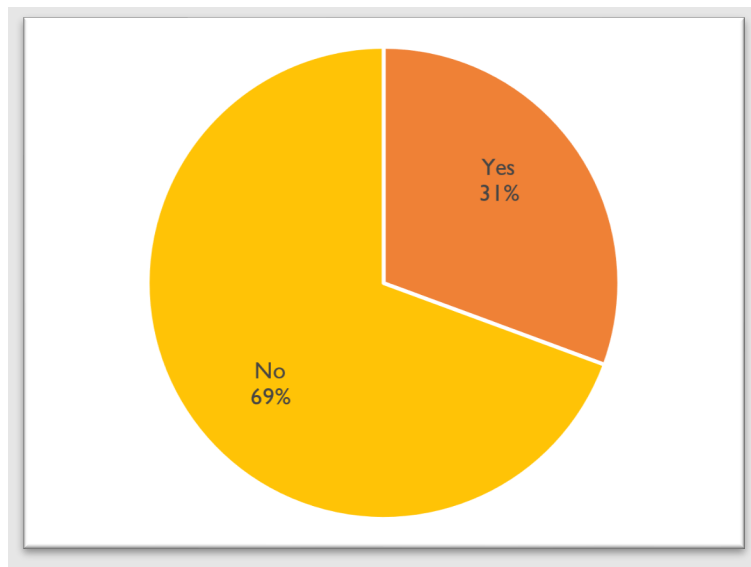


Figure 3: How old are you?

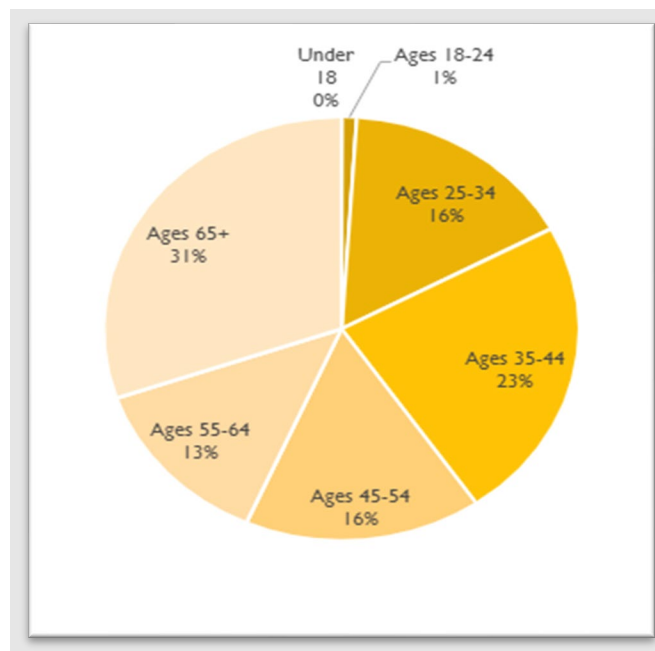


Figure 4: How many years have you lived in your current place of residence?

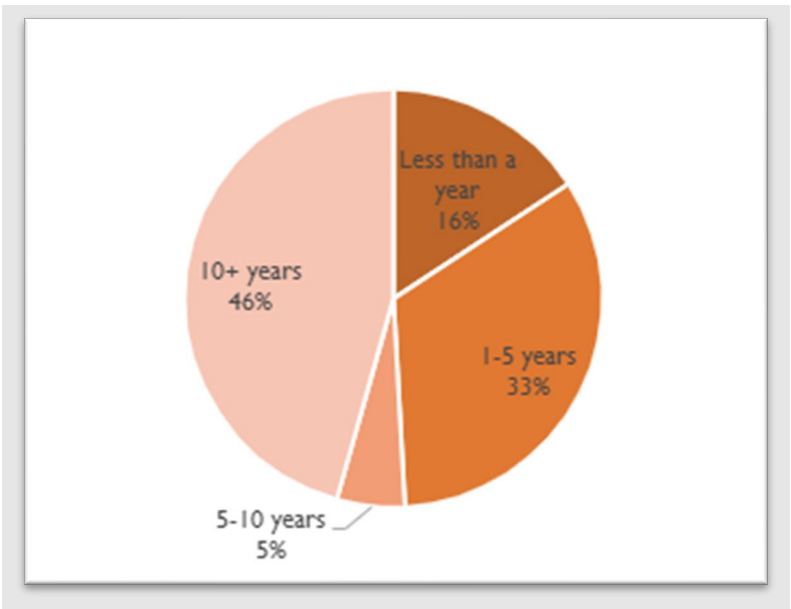
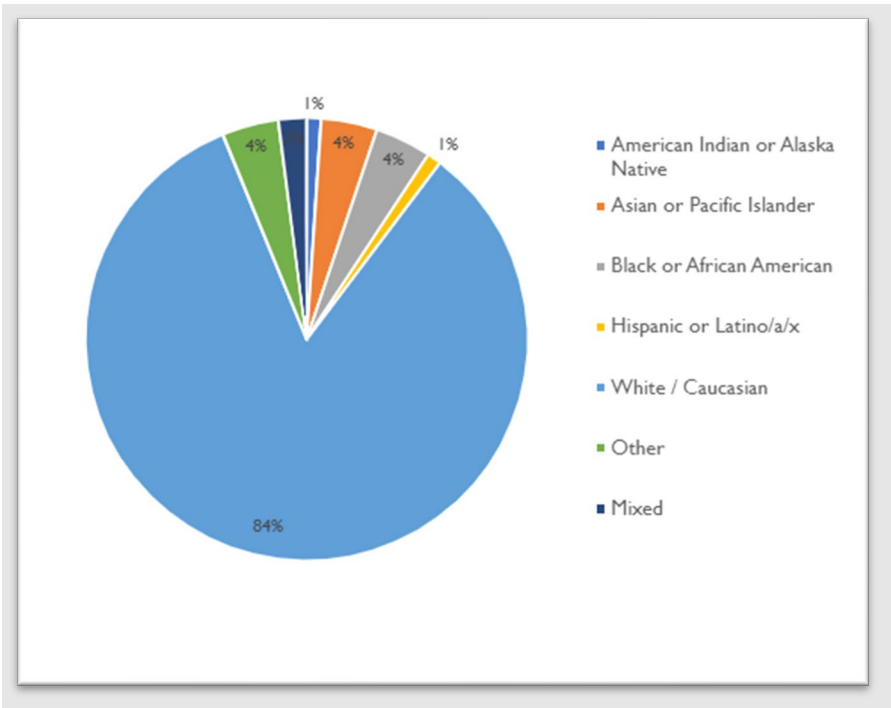


Figure 5: What is your race or ethnicity?



Survey Demographics

In total, the City received 752 responses to the survey while it was open on the Engage Rockville site. Table 5 breaks down how many survey responses were received from each of the user group options.

Table 5: Survey Responses by User Group

User Group	Number of Responses
Lives in Town Center	147
Adjacent Neighbor	403
Visitor to Town Center	341
Employee Working in Town Center	33
Student (K-12 and Montgomery College)	7
Business Owner	17
Government or Nonprofit Executive	19
Commercial or Multifamily Property Owner	4

Generally, survey respondents lived outside of Town Center but in Rockville, were mostly women, made over the median household income, were mostly white, and spoke English. The City recognizes that these results are not truly representative of Rockville or Town Center residents' demographics, and thus the survey should be reviewed with that in mind.

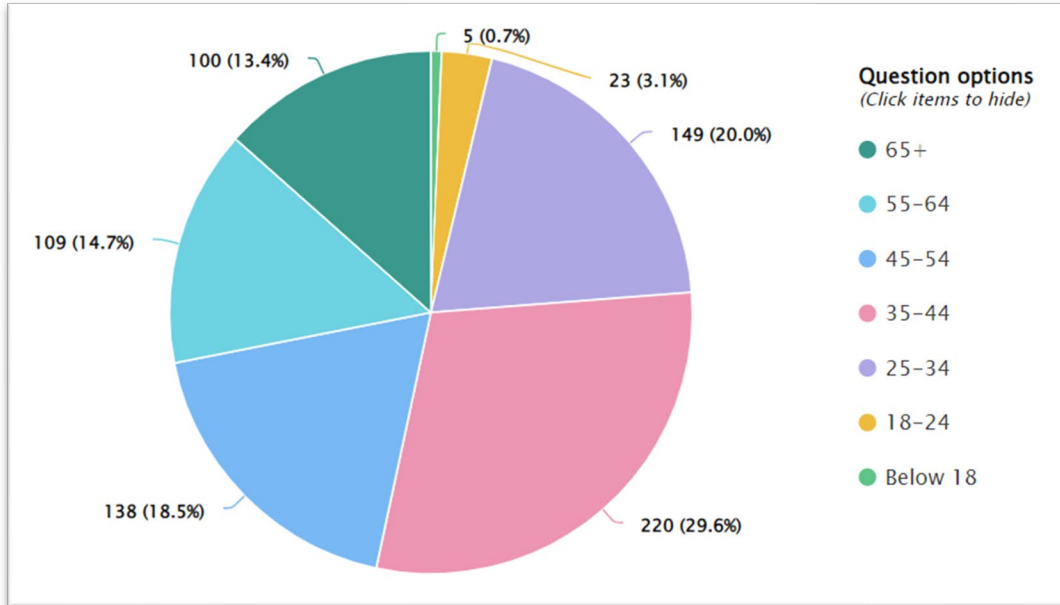
Types of Respondents

The survey was primarily taken by people living outside of Town Center, mostly people who identified primarily as adjacent neighbors (38.8%) or visitors (38.2%). With a Town Center population estimated at 4,020, this represents feedback from 3.5% of Town Center residents. The overwhelming number of respondents indicated that they lived within the City of Rockville (84.9%). The most frequently shared ZIP codes outside of Rockville were Potomac, North Bethesda, Germantown, and Gaithersburg – all at less than 1%.

Age and Gender

The age breakdown of survey respondents was largely reflective of Town Center and Rockville's population demographics. The most significant takeaway is that people under 18 were underrepresented in the survey, with only 0.7% of the respondents being under 18, compared to 11.5% of Town Center's population being under 18 years old. The Town Center residents who completed the survey were even more likely to be under the age of 44, and especially between the ages of 25-34 (31.7%). Further, women were overrepresented in survey respondents, at 59.9% compared to men at 38.8%.

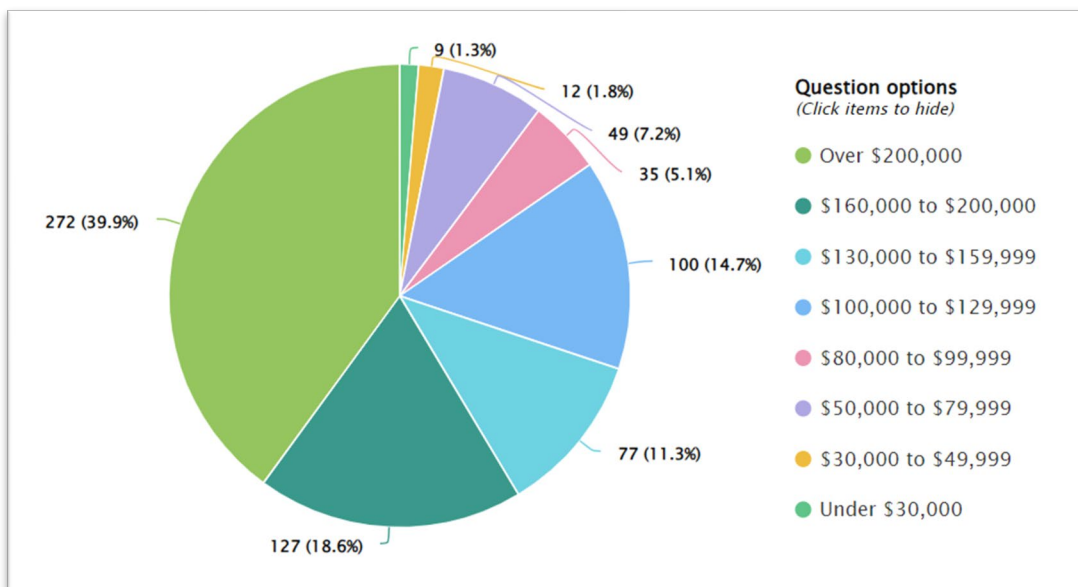
Figure 6: What is your age?



Household Income

The vast majority (84.5%) of survey respondents had a household income of over \$100,000. For context, the median household income of Town Center is \$96,773 and of Rockville is \$106,576, meaning that if the survey respondents were representative of the population, about half would have a household income over \$100,000.

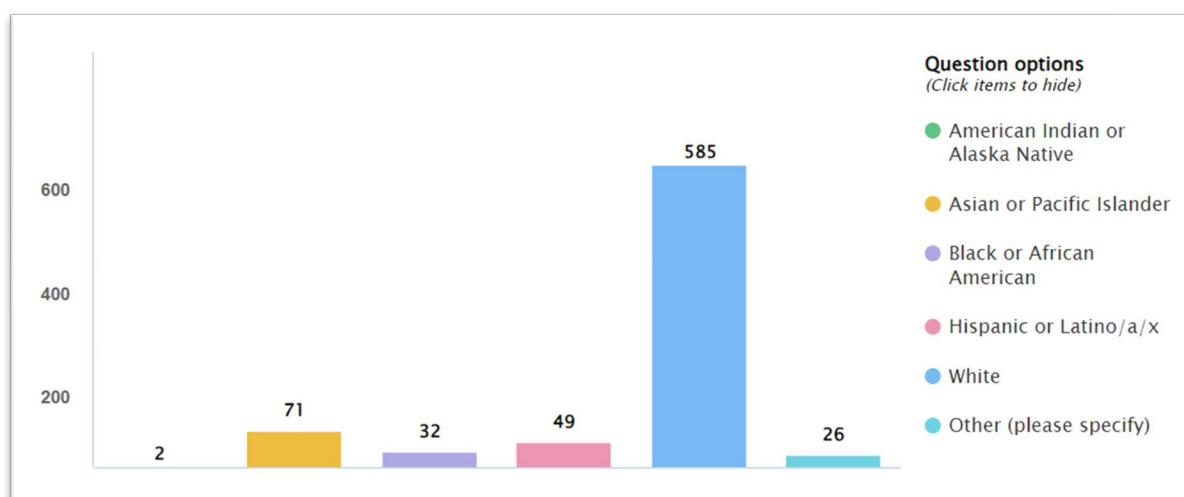
Figure 7: What is your total household income before taxes?



Race and Ethnicity

The majority of survey respondents identified as white (80.6%), which is an overrepresentation of this race when compared to the demographics of Town Center or the City as a whole. It should be noted that people of more than one race or ethnicity had the opportunity to select multiple options, so may have selected white and another race. 26 respondents (3.5%) selected more than one option. After white, the most frequent selections were Asian or Pacific Islander (9.8%), Hispanic or Latino/a/x (6.7%), and Black or African American (4.4%). The demographics of Town Center resident respondents largely follow this pattern. This compares to the overall demographics of Town Center as follows: white (47.6%), Asian (25%), Black (13.3%), Hispanic Origin (13%), some other race alone (4.6%), and two or more races (9.3%).

Figure 8: What is your race and ethnicity?



Languages Spoken

English was the overwhelming most spoken language by respondents at 98.4%. The most spoken languages after English were Spanish (6%), Chinese (3.5%), and French (1.5%). This compares with 3.7% of Town Center's residents speaking Spanish, 18.1% speaking Asian-Pacific Island languages, and 8.6% speaking Indo-European languages (not including English). 4.3% of respondents indicated they spoke another language not listed. It should be noted that the survey was available to be translated via Engage Rockville's translation function, as recommended by the Public Information Office.

Table 6: What are the primary languages spoken in your household?

Language	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
English	726	98.4%
Spanish	44	6.0%
Other	32	4.3%
Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese and Hokkien)	26	3.5%

French	11	1.5%
Persian (including Dari and Tajik)	4	0.5%
Tagalog (including Filipino)	3	0.4%
Arabic	3	0.4%
Japanese	3	0.4%
Vietnamese	1	0.1%
Korean	1	0.1%
Swahili	1	0.1%

Housing Status and Length of Residency

Respondents who identified themselves as residents of Town Center or its adjacent neighborhoods were asked about their housing status. Homeowners are more represented in the data than renters; the actual split of homeowners to renters in Town Center is 23.5% to 74.7%. However, this still shows that Town Center residents were significantly engaged in the survey.

Table 7: Housing Status

	Total from Survey	Town Center	Adjacent Neighborhoods
Rent	21.5%	51.2%	5.3%
Own	64.4%	42.4%	82.4%
Staying with family or friends temporarily	1.3%	0.6%	1.5%
Supportive housing	11.7%	4.1%	0%
Living in a shelter	0%	0%	10.2%
Without permanent shelter (ex: living on the street, in a car)	0%	0%	0.6%
Other	1.0%	1.7%	0%

The distribution of Town Center residents who completed the survey is largely reflective of the general Town Center population regarding the amount of time they have lived in their current place of residency.

Summary of Feedback

This section of the document summarizes feedback received by staff throughout the entirety of the outreach and engagement phase of the project. The ideas, views, and concepts presented on the following pages do not necessarily represent the City's opinion but come directly from members of the community who have participated in this process. In many cases, information presented below includes direct quotes from interviews, public meetings, and online feedback tools.

Furthermore, this section provides highlights of feedback through each engagement tool. In many cases, feedback is consistent among many methodologies, but there are instances where feedback received via one methodology contradicts or is the opposite of feedback received through a different tool. For example, the idea of adding a dog park to Town Center was discussed frequently in the survey and highly ranked during the "Vote with Your Dollars" exercise but was ranked quite low in one of the scenario questions. Staff are aware of these discrepancies, and readers of this document should be aware that they will see different feedback on similar topics between different engagement tools.

Finally, not everything presented within the Summary of Feedback will be addressed or brought forward in the updated Master Plan. All ideas will be taken into consideration by staff as they draft the Update but may or may not be reflected in the plan itself. As the purpose of this Community Engagement Report is to presenting findings, the community should expect to see staff recommendations for the planning area when the draft master plan is released for public consumption in early 2024.

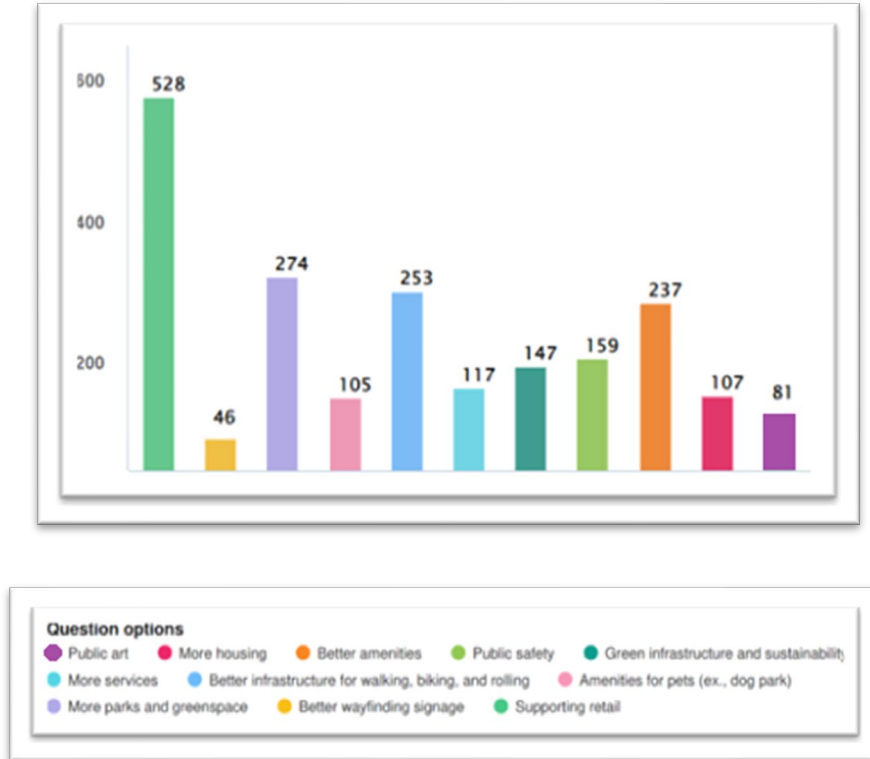
Survey Results

The survey posted on Engage Rockville received a total of 752 responses. Much of the information provided in the subsections below is an aggregation of all of the survey responses. Typically, these results are presented as themes. The survey did, however, utilize conditional logic and only asked certain questions to certain respondents. The subsections below that are titled with a specific group of people display the findings from that particular subset of the survey respondents.

General Priorities

Respondents were given a list of 11 possible general priorities for Town Center and asked to pick their top three. The most popular options selected were supporting retail (70.7%); more parks and greenspace (36.7%); better infrastructure for walking, biking, and rolling (33.9%); and better amenities (31.7%). When looking only at Town Center residents, better infrastructure for walking, biking, and rolling increases to the second highest priority at 38.6%, followed by more parks and greenspace (34.5%), and public safety (32.4%).

Figure 9: Top priorities for Town Center



General priorities were also revealed in the qualitative answers provided in response to the survey. A list showing all qualitative written responses aggregated follows, organized by the most frequent to least frequent responses. Note that there were also many comments about the importance of saving the movie theater, but those were not counted since the Regal Theater is no longer planning to cease operations.

- More/better retail and other activity options (93)
 - People are especially interested in a hardware store, more affordable retail options, and an anchor store.
- More variety of restaurants or better restaurants (80)
 - People were especially interested in affordable restaurants, family-friendly restaurants, cafes, salad/health-oriented restaurants, and bars.
 - Overrepresentation of Asian cuisine.
- Better pedestrian/bike infrastructure, safety, and connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods (45)
 - Many respondents especially noted feeling unsafe when walking along and across MD-355. Most respondents indicated this unease was present throughout the planning area, though the intersection of MD-355, and E. Middle Lane / Park Road was mentioned multiple times as a particularly challenging intersection.
- More housing/density (31)

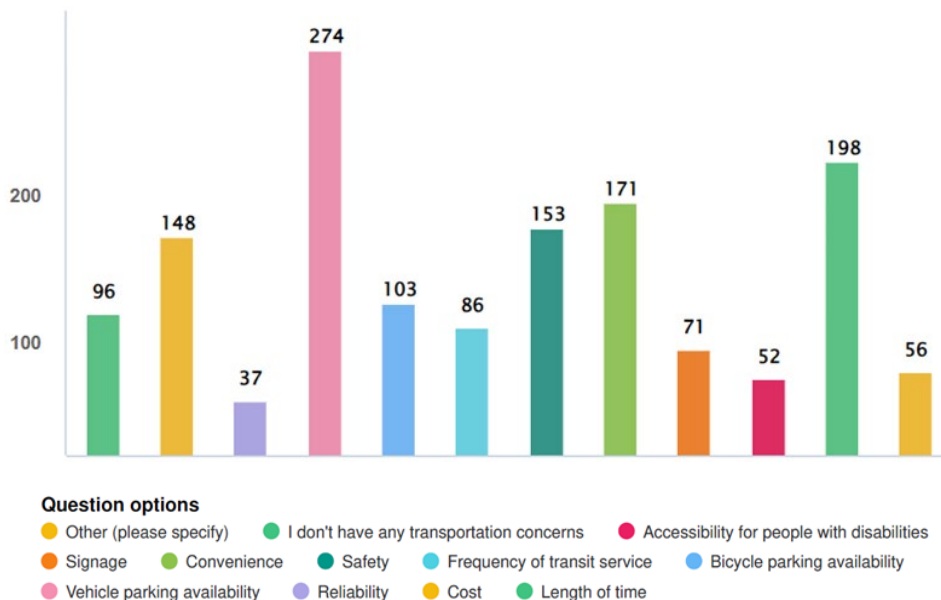
- More events and concerts (29)
 - Many people disliked that Hometown Holidays moved out of Town Center.
 - Many want the farmer's market to move to Town Square.
- Retaining businesses and filling vacant businesses (25)
 - Several respondents mentioned the City providing incentives to businesses.
- Easier, more accessible parking (24)
- Dog park and other pet-friendly places (20)
- Longer free parking or free parking (19)
- More parks and open/green space (18)
- Better, more affordable grocery options (18)
- Playground (12)
- More chain restaurants and businesses (11)
- Slower/safer roads (11)
 - Many respondents spoke about deprioritizing cars.
- Better transit access (10)
- Better signage and wayfinding (9)
- Support Gibbs Street closure (9)
- "Destination feel" (9)
 - Many people pointed to Pike & Rose and Rio as places that felt more like destinations.
- More local/mom & pop businesses (9)
- More road closures to traffic (8)
 - Several people mentioned closing Maryland Avenue.
- Affordability/high rents for businesses (8)
- Crime and public safety (8)
- Pick up/drop off parking spaces/short-term parking (7)
- Outdoor eating options (7)
- Make 355 a complete street/narrow 355 (6)
- Noise at night in Town Square (6)
- Marketing/branding, disseminating information (6)
- Gathering places (6)
- Town Square is too enclosed/does not connect well with the area around it (5)
- Public seating (5)
- Rooftop bar (5)
- Transit frequency (4)
- Traffic/ease for driver (4)
- Food trucks (4)
- Support for Dawson's Market (3)
- Entertainment venues (3)
- More nightlife (3)

- Redevelopment of vacant lots and surface parking lots (3)
- Community or youth recreation center (3)
- Electric vehicle charging stations (3)
- Do not support Gibbs Street closure (2)
- Less parking (2)
- Does not like scooter clutter (2)
- Homeownership options (2)
- Public art (2)
- Plaques remembering sites lost to urban renewal (2)
- High housing costs (2)
- Native flowers and trees (2)

Transportation

When asked to identify the top three aspects of transportation that could be improved within Town Center, respondents' top answers were vehicle parking availability (36.8%), no concerns (26.6%), convenience (23%), safety (20.5%), and cost (19.9%). However, the answers to this question shifted significantly when looking only at Town Center residents. Among residents, safety was the top priority (37.2%), followed by vehicle parking availability (30.3%) and no concerns (22.8%).

Figure 10: What aspects of transportation within Town Center can be improved?



When asked to identify the top three aspects of transportation connecting to Town Center that could be improved, respondents primarily said no concerns (34.7%), vehicle parking availability (24.6%), convenience (19.4%), frequency of transit (18.4%), and safety (17.9%). Together, these responses point to a perception related to a lack of vehicle parking, but generally that

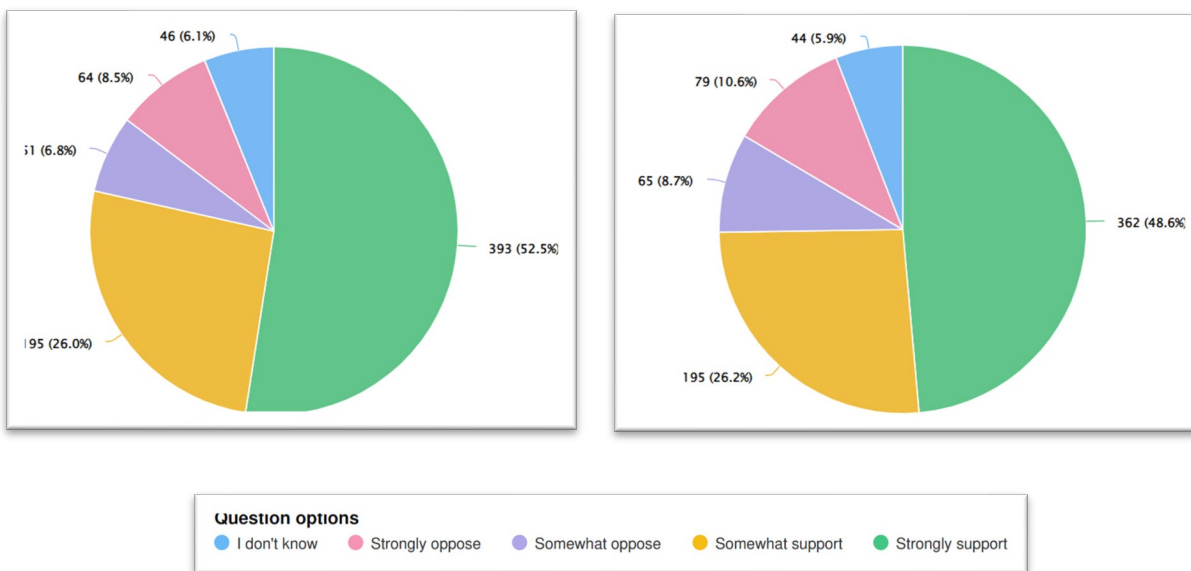
transportation is not a top concern for people who visit Town Center. Again, when looking only at Town Center residents, the top responses significantly shift to instead include no concerns (27.3%), safety (25.2%), frequency of transit service (25.2%), and convenience (20.3%). Vehicle parking availability drops to 17.5% of responses.

People responded that it is primarily very easy or easy to use most modes of transportation when traveling to and from Town Center. When traveling within Town Center, respondents primarily say that all modes of transportation are either very easy or easy, with bicycling, taking the bus, and driving being not as easy for some. The distribution of these responses is largely reflected when looking exclusively at responses from Town Center residents.

Road Diets and Complete Streets

Respondents were reminded that the recently adopted *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* envisions Rockville Pike and other roadways as multi-modal and pedestrian-friendly with high-frequency bus service, including the planned MD-355 bus rapid transit (BRT) project. Achieving this could require design changes such as more frequent crosswalks, adding bike lanes, adding bus-only lanes, installing street trees, and narrowing travel lanes to reduce speeding. Given that, 78.5% of respondents were somewhat or strongly supportive. Feedback was reduced to 74.8% when respondents were told that the changes might result in slower vehicle speeds. Town Center residents are overall slightly even more in favor of road diets and even more likely to strongly support.

Figure 11: Road Diets. The right chart depicts the answers for when asked if they would support these or similar roadway changes if they result in slower vehicle speeds.

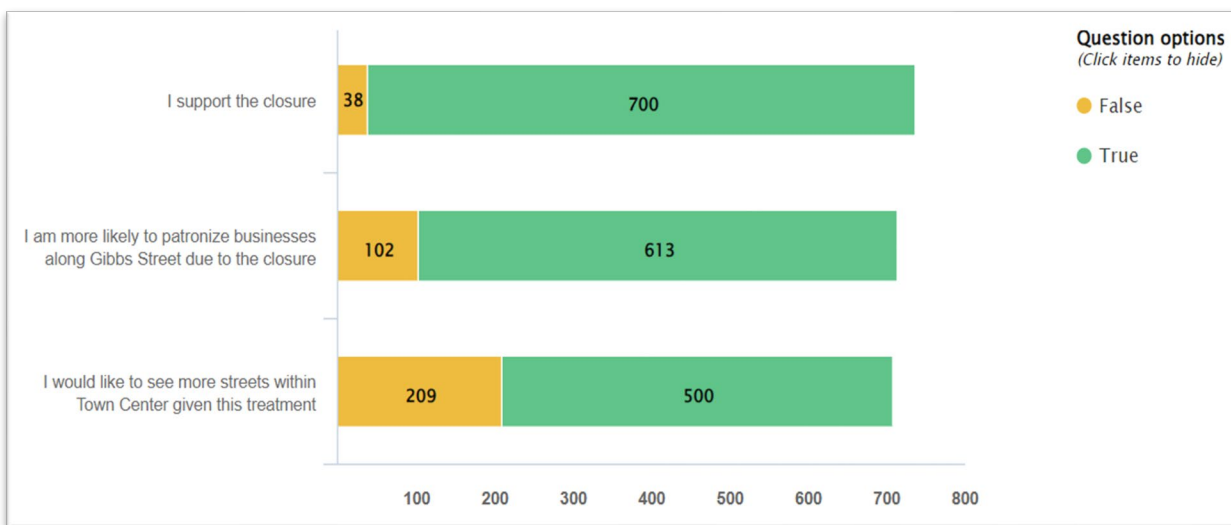


Gibbs Street

The overwhelming majority of respondents (94.9%) support the closure of Gibbs Street to vehicular traffic. Slightly fewer people (85.7%) said that they are more likely to patronize

businesses along Gibbs Street due to the closure and 70.5% said that they would like to see more streets within Town Center given this treatment. Still, this number is high enough that it warrants discussion as to what other streets might make sense to be closed to vehicle traffic. Responses from Town Center residents largely mirror the general responses.

Figure 12: Gibbs Street Responses



Parks and Public Space

Respondents were asked to pick their top three parks and public space concerns. The top results were amenities (44.2%), few options (38.9%), and no concerns (24.5%). This indicates a need to add new amenities to existing parks and more aggressively pursue the creation of new parks with amenities within Town Center. The distribution of responses when looking only at Town Center residents is almost identical.

Public Services and Community Facilities

Survey respondents were asked to compare certain community services with other neighborhoods. Most people agreed that Town Center's libraries are good or very good (85.5%). The rest of the public services (parks and greenspace, community centers, schools, and public safety) were largely rated as either good or average. The distribution of responses is largely identical when looking only at responses from Town Center residents, with a slightly higher favorability for parks and greenspaces and community centers. Based on the responses, the biggest areas for improvement are Town Center's parks and greenspaces and community centers.

Figure 13: In comparison to other neighborhoods, how do you rate Town Center's availability of public services?

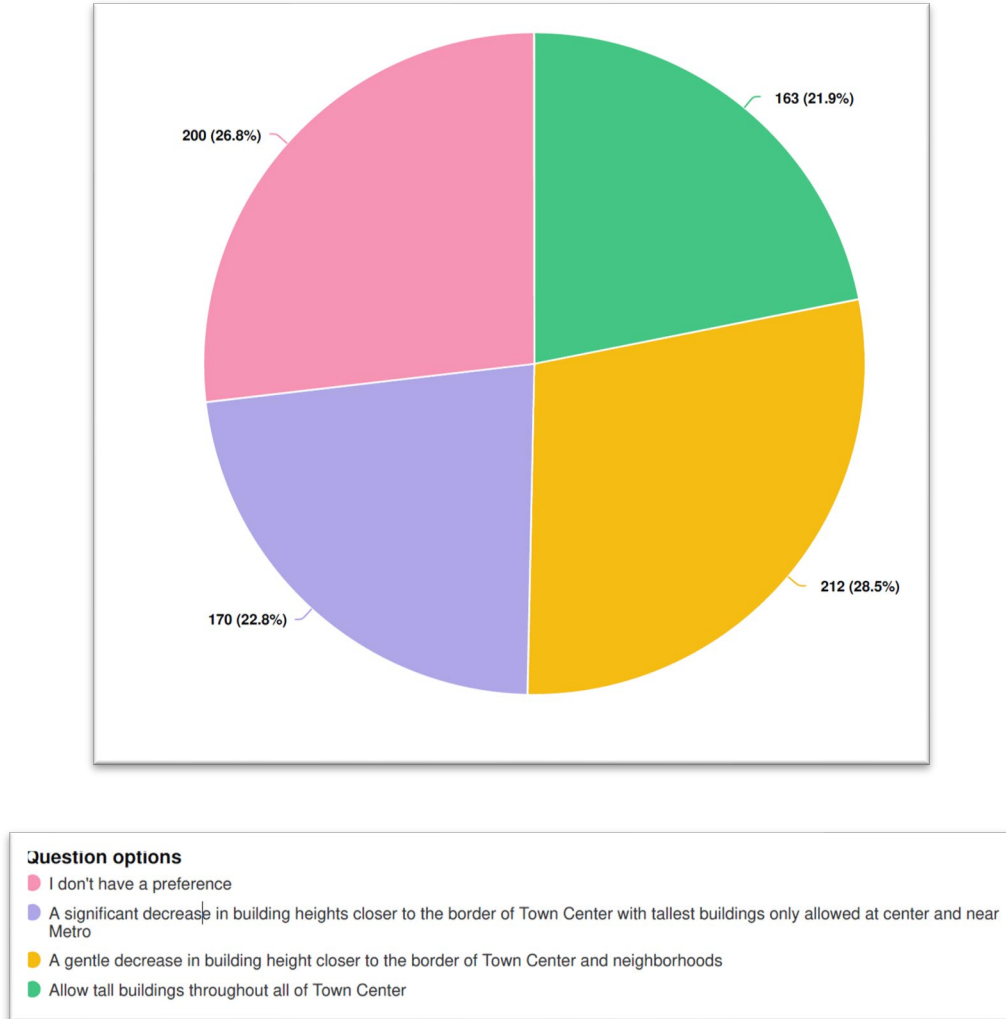


Development

When asked how new buildings along Town Center's borders with adjacent neighborhoods should be designed, there was a relatively even split between the four options, with 28.5% saying there should be a gentle decrease in building height closer to the border, 22.8% saying there should be a significant decrease, 21.9% saying tall buildings should be allowed throughout all of Town Center, and 26.8% saying that they did not have a preference.

Responses exclusively from Town Center residents are nearly identical to the general responses. Adjacent neighbors' responses were also largely similar, with slightly more respondents choosing a significant decrease rather than a gentle decrease. The percentages of adjacent neighbor respondents selecting that they did not have a preference and would like to see tall building throughout Town Center were essentially identical to the general population of respondents.

Figure 14: Development Height Preferences



MD-355

When asked how Town Center could be better integrated into Rockville Pike/Hungerford Drive (MD-355) as a destination, the top three responses were: redevelopment of buildings along MD-355 with a focus on ground-level activity (71.5%); more sidewalk, bike lane, and trail connections (53.3%); and improved pedestrian and bicycle crossings (51.1%). Responses exclusively from Town Center residents largely mirror the general responses. It is notable that the two options related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure were more highly favored than the two options related to wayfinding signage.

Town Center Residents

Residents were primarily attracted to living in Town Center due to its walkability and bikeability, proximity to Metro and other transit options, and nearby amenities. Schools and housing prices played less of a role in the decision. A few of the concerns related to housing with the Town

Center are cost and safety, followed by location, quality, and noise. Few people responded that they feel they have limited housing choices.

A majority of residents feel that they can meet most (35%) or some (47%) of their daily needs in Town Center, though very few (4%) said that they can meet all of their daily needs.

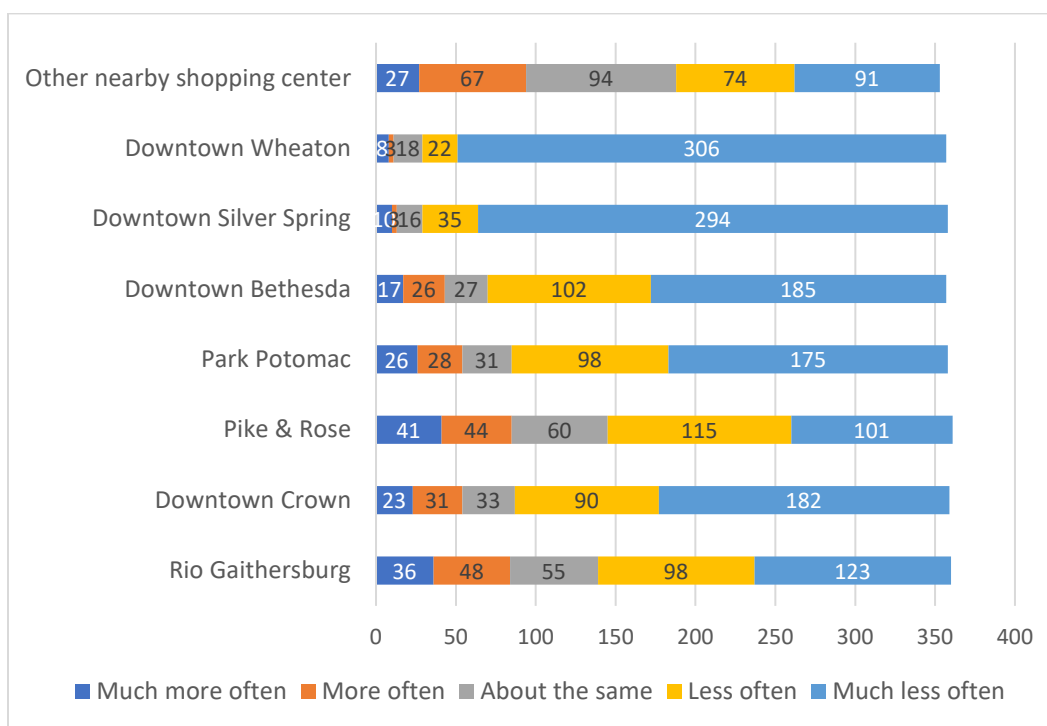
Adjacent Neighbors

Respondents in this section were primarily from West End or Woodley Gardens East-West (46%); followed by East Rockville (25%); Hungerford, New Mark Commons, Fireside Park (Parkside Landing), or Lynfield (14%); Rockville Pike (10%); and Lincoln Park (5%). This breakdown is not surprising given Lincoln Park and Rockville Pike's comparatively smaller populations.

Respondents in adjacent neighborhoods are frequent visitors to Town Center. Over half visit once a week or more, and 31% visit once a month or more. They are primarily coming to Town Center for its restaurants (30.9%), followed by groceries and the farmers market (18.2%), and the library (17.3%).

Based on the responses to this survey, Town Center's biggest competitors are Pike & Rose, Rio and Downtown Crown in Gaithersburg, and other nearby, nonspecific shopping centers. However, adjacent neighbors still say that they primarily go to these activity centers less often or much less often than Town Center. When going to other places, the primary reason is the retail options (34.1%), followed by amenities (17.4%) and parking (17.4%).

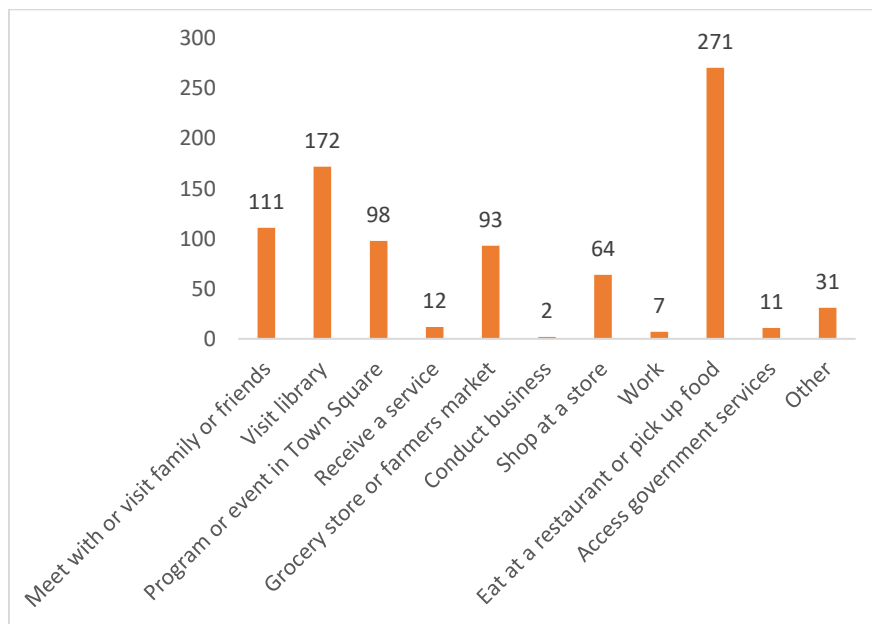
Figure 15: How often do you go to the following locations compared to Rockville Town Center?



Visitors

Those who self-identified as visitors primarily come to Town Center once a month or more (39%) or once a week or more (34%) and would be categorized as relatively frequent visitors. They are primarily visiting Town Center to eat at a restaurant or pick up food (31.1%), followed by visiting the library (19.7%) and meeting with or visiting family or friends (12.7%). This, along with the responses from adjacent neighbors, indicates that the library is a bigger draw for Town Center than previously anticipated.

Figure 16: What reasons do you visit Town Center? Select the top three.



Visitors to Town Center who responded to the survey are primarily visiting Town Center, but also visit other nearby shopping centers including Rio in Gaithersburg and Pike & Rose. It is clear these are Town Center's major economic competitors. When choosing to visit other locations, visitors do so for the retail options (29.9%), amenities (16.6%), parking (14.5%), and because they are closer to their home (12.6%). The distributions of both these responses closely mirror the responses from adjacent neighbors; pointing to a perception by many that Town Center needs more competitive retail options, better amenities, and/or better parking solutions, all reasons respondents indicated they visit other shopping centers over Town Center.

Employees

Of the 20 respondents who identified as working in Town Center, they are overwhelmingly going into the office three days a week or more (74%). 78% visit Town Center businesses besides their own about once a week or more. They would be more likely to do so if there were different or expanded options (50%), if they had more time for breaks or lunch (25%), and if there were more options closer to their work (14%).

Students

A total of seven students filled out the survey: four students from Richard Montgomery High School, two from Montgomery College, and one who identified as an elementary schooler. Four respondents said that Town Center felt either welcoming or very welcoming to young people, although one said it felt extremely unwelcoming.

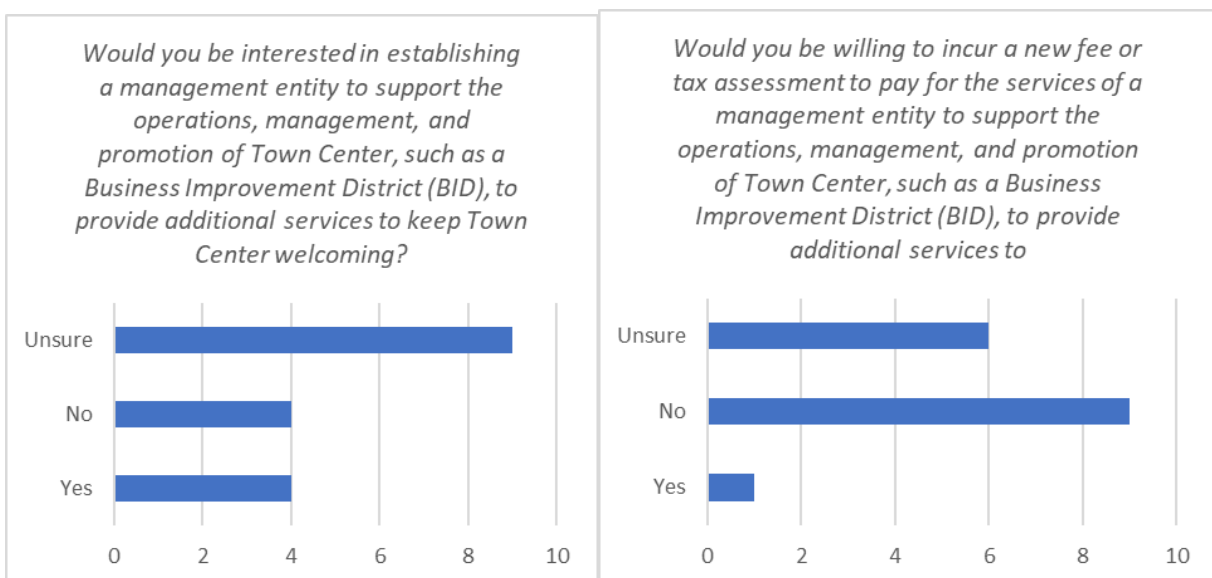
The four Richard Montgomery students who completed the survey primarily traveled to school via walking or wheelchair/other mobility device or school bus. The school bus, Ride On or Metrobus, car (driving self), car (driving with parents/others/carpool), taxi or rideshare, Metro, bicycle, and walking all received two or more responses saying they were either difficult or very difficult to use. This potentially points to Richard Montgomery needing improved accessibility with multiple modes of transportation.

Business Owners

17 business owners or managers completed the survey. Most had been operating their business for 10+ years (47%), although 29% had been operating 1-5 years. A majority of respondents have 75-100% of their employees in the office or place of business on any given weekday.

Most respondents were unsure (53%) about establishing a management entity to support the operations, management, and promotion of Town Center. Even more were unsure (38%) or opposed (56%) when asked if they would be willing to incur a new fee or tax assessment to pay for the services of a management entity.

Figure 17: Questions about forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or other similar entity.



Business owners chose to locate in Town Center primarily because they live nearby (21%) and proximity to transit (15%). The biggest concerns expressed by business owners about continuing to operate here were cost of living for employees (25%), rising commercial rents or business

expenses (22%), followed by marketing and promotion (13%), relationship with property owner or landlord (13%), and other (13%).

Government or Nonprofit Executives

10 government or nonprofit executives completed the survey. They have operated in Town Center for varying lengths of time, and primarily come from the social services or nonprofit (40%), other (30%), and health (20%) sectors. Respondents ranged in size from zero full-time employees to 100, and from one part-time employee to 75. Five organizations said that on any given weekday about 25-49% of their employees are in the office; two organizations said 50-74%; and two said 75-100%.

Respondents said that they are primarily located in Town Center due to the customer/user base. Other top reasons included being near other businesses or organizations needed to operate their organization, and proximity to transit. Their greatest operational concerns were marketing and promotion (20%), employee recruitment (15%), rising rents (15%), and cost of living for employees (15%).

In the long-form response to the question of what the City could provide to retain or expand your organization in Town Center, two respondents mentioned more interesting tenants. Others mentioned free parking on weekends, closing Maryland Avenue to through traffic, grant or other funding support, and marketing or promotional support. Most respondents either had no interaction with the permitting or licensing process within the City or had generally positive interactions.

Commercial or Multifamily Property Owners

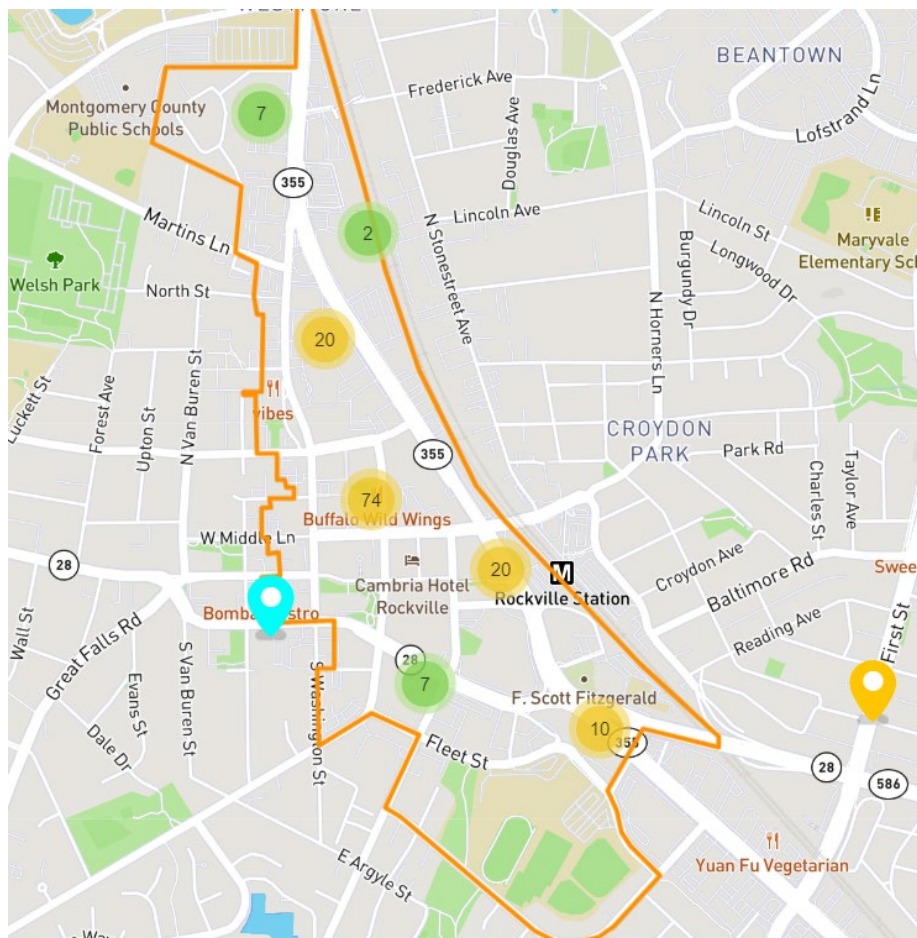
Four commercial or multifamily property owners completed the survey. They either owned one (50%) or two (50%) properties that were either residential (50%) or mixed-use (50%). The top reasons respondents gave for purchasing their property in Town Center were that they lived in the planning area or nearby, the property was close to their job, near to Metro and other transit options, walkability or bikeability, customer base, and the rent that can be charged.

Half of the respondents were happy with their current property and not interested in redeveloping. The other half said that they were interested in redevelopment, with one property owner hoping to redevelop soon and the other waiting for the right time. Two respondents described the development process in Rockville as challenging, with one saying that they had not interacted with the development process and the other not responding.

When asked about the biggest opportunity for their property, those with the most responses were improved public infrastructure (50%) and reinvestment or renovation of existing property (50%). The major challenge, as selected by one respondent, was parking.

Reaction Map Results

While the reaction map widget was active on the Engage Rockville website, participants used it to place individual “pins” throughout the Town Center. These user-placed pins captured participant feedback in six defined comment areas: “Spot I Love,” “Needs Improvement,” “Somewhere I Go Often,” “Somewhere I Go Rarely/Not at All,” “New Ideas/Things I’d Like to See,” and “Other.”



Map showing location of feedback pins on the Reaction Map.

“Pin” feedback varied from participant to participant. Some participants pinned a unique concept, while others supported an already posted comment, or even posted a contrasting viewpoint. On occasion, a participant provided multiple thoughts or recommendations in a pin.

Upon closing of the reaction map, the City received 143 different pins/comments from a total of 13 users. A breakdown of the number of pins within each of the categories is provided in Table 8.

Table 8: Reaction Map Pins by Category

Category	Number of Pins
Spot I Love	18
Needs Improvement	44
Somewhere I Go Often	1
Somewhere I Go Rarely/Not at All	12
New Ideas/Things I'd Like to See	55
Other	13

A summary of feedback provided through the reaction map is outlined in Table 9.

Table 9: Summary of Reaction Map Comments

Pin Category	% of Pins	Feedback Received
Spot I Love	13%	• Open Space, Bandshell, and Ice Rink in Town Square. • Water features / fountains throughout Town Center. • Outdoor Dining. • Retail Options in the Area (Dawson's Market, Great Wall Supermarket, Paris Baguette) • Metro Access. • Gibbs Street Closed as a pedestrian way / "streeterly." • Courthouse Square.
Needs Improvement	31%	• Town Square Landscaping and Furniture. • Various Buildings with Open / Vacant Retail Spaces. • Area South of MD-28 feels under-utilized; low density; redevelopment potential as being close to Metro. • Promenade Park: flooding takes place as the drains back up; lighting is poor; main transportation entrance and it should reflect; redevelopment potential; not welcoming and difficult to find if not familiar with it; promenade stairs need cleaning and repair; add greenery, resurface walkway, add color to this bland space. • Utility poles in the right-of-way; consider burying these lines. • Area north of Beall Avenue could use a master planning initiative for redevelopment

		as it does not connect with the Town Square; seems piecemeal. • Juror's parking on Jefferson Street. • Vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections from Town Center to adjacent neighborhoods and parks; sidewalks need improvement; bike lanes are confusing. • "Mixing bowl" intersection of Viers Mill Road and MD-355 is dangerous for pedestrians. • Various crosswalks and intersections are unsafe: Middle Lane and MD-355; Maryland Avenue and Middle Lane; Jefferson Street and Monroe Street; Viers Mill and MD-355. • Desire more variety in tenants and what is offered in Town Center; too many restaurants; need a bookstore, a bike shop, a skate shop, better fast casual restaurant options; a pharmacy; corner stores for quick grab items, and a hardware store. • When there are loading docks, trucks do not pull all the way and block sidewalks and drive aisles through Town Square.
Somewhere I Go Often	1%	• County Executive Office Building and plaza.
Somewhere I Go Rarely/Not at All	9%	• MD-355 between Beall Avenue to Martin's Lane. • 255 Rockville Pike. • MD-355 between Middle Lane and Beall Avenue. • Rockville Memorial Library.
New Ideas/Things I'd Like to See	39%	• Dog Park, green space, community use at Maryland Avenue and Middle Lane. • Consider moving City Hall to 255 Rockville Pike and redeveloping the current site as mixed-used containing residential, retail, and public spaces. • Create multiple gateway entries for the Town Center. • Improve access to Veteran's Park and allow it to serve as a branded eastern green gateway. • Redevelopment of area east of MD-355 between Middle and Martins Lanes. • Move Farmer's Market somewhere else as the parking lot is unattractive and the intersection is dangerous; consider a year-round farmer's market and find an anchor to help support it. • Courthouse Square: add improved and accessible outdoor furniture (benches, tables,

		etc.); consider new use for courthouse that would bring more vitality to Town Center. • Redevelopment of Fire Station and buildings to the north into a mixed-use site thereby expanding Town Center’s footprint to the north; consider saving the façade of fire station. • Consider ways to improve interactivity and connectivity with F. Scott Fitzgerald’s grave at the St. Mary’s Cemetery. • Consider untapped potential with the library; bring in a maker space at an hourly rate; host more events. • Connect existing parks via new smaller parks to create a network of green and open spaces for the Town Center. • Green medians and other traffic calming measures. • Create a unified sidewalk design and bring expanded street furniture throughout the Town Center to help universally brand it. • Abandon the western portion of N. Washington Street, combine lots, and provide new redevelopment potential. • N. Washington Street needs denser buildings and uses. • Connect Town Center to Montgomery College; consider a bike and pedestrian trail. • United States Post Office is a redevelopment opportunity; place USPS in the ground floor of a new building there. • Develop other crossings over the railway corridor into adjacent neighborhoods; additional bridges would help bring circulation into the Town Center.
Other	7%	• Loss of CVS negatively impacts the community.

Idea Board Results

The idea board widget on Engage Rockville saw 10 new ideas added by 5 unique users, and a total of 9 “likes” were given to various ideas. Table 10 shows the ideas presented on the idea board and the number of “votes” supporting each idea. The ideas listed in Table 10 are direct quotes from the Idea Board.

Table 10: Idea Board Responses

Idea	Supporting Votes
Allow unlimited residential density within 1 mile of Town Center and remove parking requirements to increase walkability and affordability.	0
Our County differentiates itself with its connection to science (like Universities at Shady Grove or NIH), and yet Rockville Science Center could be so much more. Why not embrace this idea more and expand it?	3
Keep Gibbs Street closed. It never offered much of a throughfare for traffic but has allowed for so much more livable community space. I don't think it's any coincidence that most of the new and successful restaurants are along it.	3
Use underused/unleased retail space as a satellite location for senior center/adult day program/elder-focused programming.	1
Identify space for intergenerational day programming (day care w/adult day program on same site).	0
Increase the safety and joy of pedestrian travel while slowing down traffic. In accordance with the ULI report, narrowing down the smaller streets into one-way streets is a great idea. It will slow traffic down to allow safer passage of pedestrians and will open more space for pedestrian travels whether by walking, cycling, skateboarding, or other. This will also give drivers and passengers more time to look around and see things they may want to stop and visit.	0
Shuttle service to and from Montgomery College to increase library use and retail sales. A shuttle service that brings students from the college down to the square, to the theater at the most, will significantly increase sales, use of spaces, community events, and many more unseen benefits. Students will minimally purchase food and drinks, but their potential is enormous.	1
Rockville Town Center/Square Theme of Balance. The ULI report suggests differentiating Rockville from other town squares like Downtown Crown/Rio and Pike/Rose. I think a good theme could be something about balance. Crown/Rio and Pike/Rose are big and have big chains in them. Rockville is smaller and needs something more desirable than a big chain. A huge focus today is on balancing life: work/life, city/nature, time/money, etc. Rockville's theme should focus on balance and can represent that easily by adding green spaces: on roofs, bridges, sidewalks, etc. showing that it is possible to live both in a city and nature at the same time. Other features of the area could include yoga studios, self-help facilities, space in the library for self-help, podcast broad-casting studio, zen-like spaces, life coaches, a Garden where people can buy plants, vegetarian stores/restaurants, a small river, etc.	1
Break up MASTER PLAN to start change NOW. From my understanding, this plan is to be completed in 2040. However, I am concerned that by the time it finishes, the facts will have changed, the culture may change, and other unknown changes may occur. The past 4 years have opened our eyes to the fact that we need to incorporate change into our plans so that we can pivot and adapt accordingly. I would urge the council to consider separating its aspects into smaller sections and to have a structure of decisions based on the results of those changes, rather than have one huge plan. For example, the plan should incorporate if/then statements for each issues needing solved. For businesses closing, say you add transit from the college to the town square. If business profits increase above a threshold, then move on to other issues to solve. If	0

business profits maintain or decrease, then proceed with additional, riskier, measures like adding a residential building. Once that building finishes, repeat the process, but proceed with other issue if/then statements while it is being built. The if/then method will allow flexibility in actions needed to resolve issues while still having a plan for the next 15+ years. The difference is that the current plan does not incorporate any changes that could occur between now and 2040. The if/then plan will incorporate possibilities of changes thought of, and flexibility for changes not thought of while also allowing smaller changes to start immediately! It much easier to get 1 smaller project going than to get 15+ years of projects approved to start going.	
With Mosaic District in mind for future development would be nice.	0

Word Cloud Results

At the kickoff listening sessions and in some of the roundtable and stakeholder interviews attendees were encouraged to provide feedback to the City by submitting answers to questions through a word cloud. Word clouds are clusters of words that are depicted in different sizes. Larger and bolder words indicate that response was given multiple times, whereas smaller words indicate the response is less frequent. Word clouds are a dynamic and interactive tool for meeting organizers and attendees to view feedback in real time, on demand.

The word clouds below display a summary of the responses to each question asked at all the meetings combined.

Figure 18: What one word would you use to describe Town Center?



Community Engagement Report: Town Center Master Plan Update – DRAFT



Community Engagement Report: Town Center Master Plan Update – DRAFT

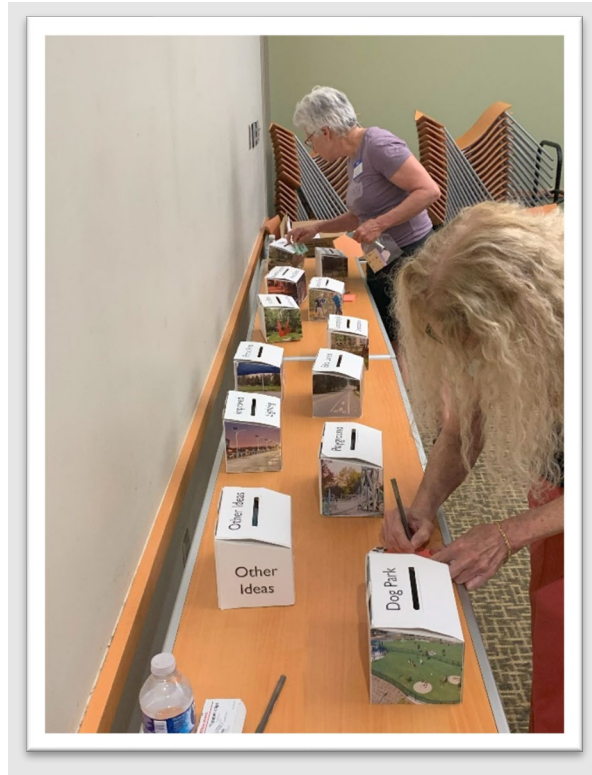


Figure 21: What should Town Center be known for?



Vote with Your Dollars Exercise Results

During the kickoff listening sessions, attendees participated in an activity known as “Vote with your Dollars.” In this exercise, each attendee was given a predetermined number of play “Rockbills.” Attendees needed to allocate their Rockbills among different 11 options for amenities that could be added to Town Center. There was also an “other” category where participants could indicate a specific amenity to allocate money to instead of the predetermined options. Attendees needed to associate a dollar value with each of the amenities, with the only rule being that given the denominations of money, it would be impossible to vote for every amenity. Much like what occurs during the City’s annual budget process, meeting attendees had to allocate a limited number of resources (Rockbills) across many great wishes and desires (amenities).



Attendees of the April 13 Listening Session participate in the Vote with your Dollars activity.

Table 11 lists the aggregated results of the Vote with your Dollars activity. Amenities that are in blue rows indicate the predetermined amenity options provided to all meeting attendees. Amenities that are in green rows indicate those amenities that were generated by meeting attendees through the “other ideas” option.

Table 11: Vote with your Dollars Activity Results

Amenity	Dollars Allocated	Percentage of Total
Arts/Performance Events	\$308	13.62%
Landscaping and Streetscapes	\$272	12.02%
Dog Park	\$242	10.7%
Sidewalk and Trail Improvements	\$234	10.34%
Playground	\$199	8.8%
Bike Lanes	\$193	8.53%
Parks	\$170	7.52%
Exercise Park	\$141	6.23%
Improved Lighting	\$120	5.31%
Picnic Facilities	\$98	4.33%
Art Park / Sculpture Garden	\$90	3.98%
Housing (mid-rise or townhouses)	\$75	3.32%
Community Center / Meeting Space	\$14	0.62%
Arts & Entertainment District	\$12	0.53%
More Density in SF Dwelling Units; Less Parking	\$10	0.44%

Tunnel MD-355	\$10	0.44%
Infrastructure for Street Festivals	\$10	0.44%
Cultural Events and Programming	\$10	0.44%
Promenade Park Improvements	\$10	0.44%
Professional/Family Theater	\$8	0.35%
Town Center Entrance Signage	\$7	0.31%
Black Museum	\$6	0.27%
Shuttle Bus to Metro	\$5	0.22%
Better Access from Lincoln Park and Historic District	\$5	0.22%
Visibility	\$5	0.22%
Safety	\$3	0.13%
Guest and Overnight Parking	\$2	0.09%
Music Theater	\$1	0.04%
More Fun Stuff	\$1	0.04%
Daycare Center	\$1	0.04%

Scenario Question Results

Throughout the kickoff listening sessions, as well as at tabling events, staff posed a series of scenarios to seek insight into people's attitudes and feelings. Each of these scenario questions had predetermined answers and participants were invited to place one dot sticker in the box that aligned with their preferred answer to the question. Participants were directed to only select one of the provided answers – they were not allowed to add a new option or select more than one of the provided answers. Most scenario questions only had two possible responses, though a handful contained three options.

The intention with the scenario questions was to get participants thinking critically about what is most important to them and make decisions between two or more tradeoffs. In some cases, the responses to the scenario questions were opposites or mutually exclusive – an environment where all responses are possible is unlikely. Other scenario questions had a potential compromise between the options that could be reached, but for the purposes of this exercise, participants were directed to only select one choice.



Attendees at the April 19 Listening Session provide answers to scenario questions.

Table 12 reports the aggregated findings of each of the scenario questions posed during the outreach and engagement phase of the project at both the listening sessions and tabling events.

Table 12: Scenario Question Results

What is more important?		
	Free /low-cost parking	71%
	Parking as close to destination as possible	29%
What would you prefer?		
	Free/low-cost parking that is more difficult to find	30%
	Paid parking that is easier to find	70%
What would you prefer?		
	One large, highly amenitized central open space in Town Center	59%
	A series of smaller open spaces scattered throughout Town Center with less amenities in each	41%
What is more important?		
	New open space for people	73%
	New open space for dogs/pets	27%
What is more important?		
	A better pedestrian bridge to the Rockville Metro Station	24%
	A more pleasant experience crossing Rockville Pike (MD-355)	76%
What is more important?		
	More outdoor dining	87%
	More street parking	13%
What should Town Center's streets prioritize?		
	Safety and functionality for all users	95%
	Speed for vehicles	5%

Regarding commercial establishments, what would you prefer to see?		
	More dining/food options	42%
	More retail goods and services options	58%
How should connections between Town Center and Montgomery College be improved?		
	Construct additional walking/biking paths	45%
	Improve transit/shuttle connections	41%
	Provide additional micromobility options	7%
	No improvements need to be made	6%
Should the City be involved with incentivizing businesses to come/stay in Town Center?		
	Yes	59%
	No	10%
	Only in very specific cases	31%

In addition to the questions posed in Table 12 above, staff also asked participants three questions pertaining to Town Center’s streets and preferences on what various streets should look like. The findings from these three questions are provided in Table 13. The map and imagery/description that accompanied each of the questions are also provided below in Figures 23 – 25.

Figure 22: What should the business district roads in Town Center look like?

What should the business district roads in Town Center look like?



Business district roads are pink on this map.



OPTION 1: One travel lane in each direction, landscaped center medians, on street parking on both sides, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.



OPTION 2: One travel lane in each direction, no center median, bike lanes on both sides, on street parking on both sides, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.



OPTION 3: One travel lane in each direction, no center median, sidewalks on both sides, street trees on both sides.

Figure 23: What should the arterial roads in Town Center look like?

What should the arterial roads in Town Center look like?



Arterial roads are **red** on this map.





OPTION 1: One to two travel lanes in each direction, landscaped medians/separated turning lanes, bike lanes on both sides, on street parking on both sides, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.

OPTION 2: Two travel lanes in each direction, on street parking along one side, no center median/turning lane, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.

OPTION 3: Two travel lanes in each direction, on street parking, on both sides, continuous center turning lane, minimal bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure.

Figure 24: What should the major roads in Town Center look like?

What should the major roads in Town Center look like?



Major roads are **yellow** on this map.





OPTION 1: Three travel lanes in each direction, landscaped center median, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.

OPTION 2: Three travel lanes in each direction, center median with designated turn lanes, sidewalks on both sides.

OPTION 3: Three lanes of travel in each direction, bus rapid transit lane in the center, bike lanes on both sides, sidewalks on both sides.

Table 13: Scenario Questions Responses Specific to Streets

What should the business district roads in Town Center look like?		
	Option 1	52%
	Option 2	43%
	Option 3	5%
What should the arterial roads in Town Center look like?		
	Option 1	83%
	Option 2	11%
	Option 3	7%
What should the major roads in Town Center look like?		
	Option 1	15%
	Option 2	13%
	Option 3	72%

Kickoff Meeting Small Group Activity

During each of the kickoff listening sessions, all meetings concluded with a small group activity. Meeting attendees were divided into several groups, with most groups having between 5 and 10 participants. In these groups, participants were presented with a map of the Town Center planning area and prompted by staff to indicate/mark up the map with their thoughts and ideas. Staff acted as facilitators and asked questions to spark conversation, such as:

- Where do you think there are opportunities for development/redevelopment? What type of buildings would you like to see? What land uses?
- Where would you want to see new open spaces? What works with the existing open spaces? What doesn't?
- Are there uses you would like to see in certain places in Town Center?
- Which road corridors should be redesigned? How should they be changed? Do the current transportation options work for you?
- Are there community facilities that are missing from Town Center? What are they? Where should they go?

Findings from the small group discussions varied from meeting to meeting and group to group. Table 14 summarizes the most frequently recurring comments and themes throughout all the small group discussions.

Table 14: Summary of Findings from Small Group Discussions at Kickoff Listening Sessions

Theme	Subcategory	Comment
Transportation	Automobile	• Current vehicle speeds are a concern. • Maryland Avenue can be dangerous to drive at night. • MD-355 doesn't allow many left turns, which makes Town Center hard to get to. • MD-355 should be developed into a boulevard.

		Driving through Town Center can be challenging with pedestrian focused streets.
	Parking	- Appreciate 2 hours of free parking in public garages but would like more time free. - Many people don't know about 2-hour free parking. - There are limited parking options for overnight guests. - Parking can be hard to find if you don't know where you are going; consider signage. - Transform underutilized parking into something else.
	Pedestrians	- MD-355 is very intimidating to cross on foot. - Many crosswalks in Town Center still feel unsafe as they are not properly illuminated, or traffic goes too fast. - Sidewalks are too narrow. - Many sidewalks create hazards with different materials (bricks, etc.), poor maintenance, curb cuts and ramps not aligning, etc. - Would like to see additional bike paths. - Traffic calming is needed throughout Town Center. - Need more benches and places to sit and rest while walking. - Would like to see more pedestrian only streets like Gibbs Street. - Intersection of Rockville Pike/Viers Mill is dangerous to cross. - Extend Maryland Avenue north of Beall Avenue.
	Public Transportation	- Town Center does not feel connected to the Metro; Metro itself feels disconnected from nearby neighborhoods. - Support of proposed MD-355 bus rapid transit project. - Discussion of shuttles within or bringing people to Town Center from nearby areas.
Development & Built Environment	Building Density	- Area around Metro should be high density. N. Washington Street corridor has potential for redevelopment/increased density. - Support of additional density in Town Center and acknowledgement that some parcels are underutilized. - Town Center seems to need more residents to support the existing businesses. - Edges of Town Center can have mid-rise density to transition into other neighborhoods.
	Open Space and Parks	- Desire to see more park like spaces. - Consider ways to connect current and future greenspaces to one another and to other regional parks. - Community gardens/public greenhouse. - Indoor recreation space as well as outdoor space. - Would like to see more pocket parks, especially as area continues to develop.

		Town Square is heavy on hardscape; want some natural/green areas.
	Retail and Commercial	- Choice Hotels headquarters could become business/tech incubator. - Creation of a business improvement district. - Dining options aren't diverse, especially in terms of price point. - Would like to see people-oriented chains and services. - Current grocery stores do not meet needs. - Would like to maintain small businesses. - Restaurants don't seem to stay; many come and go regularly. - Retail should be concentrated to get critical mass.
	Housing	- Need more affordable and multigenerational housing options. - Senior housing options are limited; what does exist is expensive. - Consider redevelopment of Choice Hotels building and properties on MD-355 into mid/high-rise residential buildings. - Need to bring in mix of affordable and market rate housing. - If redevelopment sites contain affordable housing, need to allow current residents to move back into project.
	Opportunities	- Develop surface parking lots. 255 Rockville Pike is redevelopment site near Metro. - Add additional townhomes, mid/high rise development and mixed uses. - Develop the Metro parking lots. - Create public-private partnerships to make things happen. - Vacant lot at intersection of Maryland Avenue and E. Middle Lane can be developed. - Conversion of some portions of parking garages into more active uses (ex: rooftop).
Cultural	Arts & Entertainment	- Consider creating an arts and entertainment district. - Bring in new galleries and art uses. - Connect to history of F. Scott Fitzgerald. - Want new performance spaces, such as a theater. - If the Regal closes, the City will need to find another anchor to replace it. - Have events throughout Town Center, not just in Town Square. - Desire for additional programming – movies, concerts, dancing, athletic events, etc.
	Diversity	Celebrate Rockville's diversity and multiculturalism. This can be done through art and events.

		There is a natural congregation of Asian businesses – make that Town Center’s identity.
	Montgomery College	- Attract college students into the Town Center. - Make physical connections to the College via buses and multi-use paths. - Consider residential options for students to live closer to the college and help create a more focused town and gown atmosphere.
Other	Branding and Placemaking	- Need to create entry and wayfinding signage to bring people into Town Center. This is important for people walking and driving. - Many buildings are not welcoming; there is no activity on the ground floor. - Town Center should be a regional destination. - Highlight the strengths/great characteristics of Rockville.
	Public Safety	- There have been recent issues of cars hitting pedestrians or driving into spaces they should not (like Ice Rink at Town Square). - There does not seem to be City police officers walking around area. - There have been recent incidents of attempted robbery of stores.
	Connections	- Surrounding areas should remain residential in nature. - Improve connections between surrounding neighborhoods and Town Center; railroad line is a physical and metaphorical barrier. - Strengthen all neighborhoods with welcome signage.

Focus Group Roundtables Results

During the outreach and engagement period, staff held 13 curated focus groups. Major discussion points from each of the roundtables are summarized in this section.

Faith Based

- Montgomery County is investigating a model for developing affordable housing on property owned by churches and other religious uses.
- Many congregants spend time in Town Center before/after church services as a continued form of fellowship.
- Access to Metro and public transportation is key to membership of churches. There is interest in a circulator shuttle service within Town Center.
- MD-355 can be a challenge – people cannot see Town Center from the roadway, so continue driving past it.
- There seems to be an uptick in vandalism and homelessness.
- As congregations are aging, many would like to downsize and stay local. Additional options for aging population located in Town Center, whether specific senior living or smaller housing options, could meet that demand.

Adjacent Communities

- Most people in surrounding communities cite Town Center as a draw for them to come to the area and patronize Town Center frequently.
- Crossing MD-355 to get to/from Town Center is dangerous and unwelcoming.
- E. Middle Lane is major access point for neighbors getting to Town Center. There is general support for the road diet underway along E. Middle Lane.
- There appears to be a wall around Town Center, where people do not know it exists. Town Center is a beautiful cocoon, tucked away from everything else, which can be both good and bad.
- Signage goes a long way in creating a sense of place. This is lacking in Town Center.
- Would like to see more done in Town Center to address climate change – alternative energy, native plantings, more street trees, etc.
- Need to redevelop 255 Rockville Pike.
- Varying opinion on how Town Center should transition into surrounding neighborhoods. Representatives believe people are open to a transition of 3-4 stories on the edges. Concern with development in transition areas is traffic to surrounding neighborhoods.

Affordable Housing

- There is a scarcity of land to develop/redevelop in Town Center. As a result, process to purchase land is highly competitive and affordable housing developers are not able to pay inflated land values, so cannot compete in the marketplace.
- Discussion on merits of a right of first refusal program and if it should be considered in Rockville. Group consensus was mixed.
- Opposition from surrounding neighborhoods has prevented affordable housing developments in Town Center in the past. There is a lack of understanding by the population at large of what affordable housing is and what it looks like; need to educate our community to reduce pushback.
- To develop affordable housing, some sort of subsidy is necessary. Tools exist to provide that support (soft cost programs, payment in lieu of taxes program, etc.) but would need to be legislated and funded by the City.
- Predevelopment costs money and can kill deals. Streamlined processes and/or lower fees for affordable housing development could go a long way in increasing the production and affordability of units.
- Desire to see MPDU program expanded to have a lower threshold or requirement to provide higher percentage of units.
- City's spoken desire for affordable housing isn't echoed in their processes. Other jurisdictions are more collaborative, speed up processes, etc.

Senior Citizens

- Would like to see additional programming and events throughout Town Center. It feels like the vibrancy of Town Center has diminished in recent years.

- Vacancy in retail lowers the level of energy in Town Center, making other shopping areas more desirable.
- Living in Town Center is expensive – housing, restaurants, and shops are all pricey. This is pricing people out.
- Sidewalks, particularly brick sidewalks, are a trip hazard for those with limited or declining mobility.
- The library is a strong asset and anchor.

BLVD Ansel Apartment Building

- Town Square is a welcoming place; it is built as a place for people to convene.
- Need a greater diversity of retail options beyond places to eat. The non-food retail options that exist are at a very high price point.
- Dawson's is not an affordable grocery store option and Giant is far away. Most people leave Town Center to do their grocery shopping.
- Need shops for everyday needs – pharmacy, affordable groceries, pet care, etc.
- Metro is a great asset but also a missed opportunity – a lot more can be done to this part of Town Center to activate it.
- Finding handicap accessible parking is a challenge throughout Town Center.
- Town Center is experiencing the “missing middle” of housing. There are rental apartments or million-dollar homes and few housing products in between.

Black and African American

- Restaurants and dining options are a big draw into Town Center.
- Mixed feelings from the group on the closure of streets, such as Gibbs Street, for pedestrian only access. Many like the closure to cars, but it does make the area less accessible.
- There are not many other draws to the area beyond dining – need more activities and entertainment.
- Getting to Town Center from the east is dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists and even drivers.
- To keep up with competitors, we need to be innovative and creative in Town Center. Encourage development in the northern end of the planning area.
- Branding and signage is missing in Town Center. People do not know Town Center exists - we need to help navigate people to Town Center and tell its history.

Asian American and Pacific Islander

- It feels like Town Center shuts down at night and closes when the government worker population leaves. It needs to feel active at all times of day. Increased lighting can help make Town Center more attractive at night.
- Language access can be an issue, especially in older populations where English is not the first or primary language. Signage could also include visual icons in addition to destinations written in English (example: photo of a book directing to library).

- For the Asian community specifically, word is spread through newspapers, newsletters, and local community groups. To inform this community, need to work through those avenues.
- Many members of the community have difficulty using public transit, so are isolated. There are programs to increase access, but it is still an issue.
- Affordability is a problem. There is a wide range of incomes within the Asian population, but there doesn't seem to be many activities that are free or low cost.
- Town Center should embrace its multicultural identity – host programs of all different cultures and celebrations. Within the Asian community there is a lot of diversity, so should not brand Town Center as Chinese only.

Latino/a/x

- Visit Town Center for the library, dining options and festivals/events.
- Strengths of Town Center include the Metro, lots of activities for young kids, and that it feels like a safe, walkable area.
- Customer service in many of the businesses is really poor, especially towards non-native English speakers.
- Housing is not affordable in this area, forcing diverse communities out.
- Parking can be an issue – it costs money, can be hard to find and involves a fair amount of planning.
- Would like to see more cultural and entertainment uses within Town Center. Especially to celebrate Latin events and holidays.

Individuals with Disabilities

- There is an organic concentration of individuals with intellectual disabilities that has developed in the Town Center area, which has created a nice sense of community.
- Idea to train businesses on interacting with individuals with “invisible” disabilities tied to the Hidden Sunflower program.
- There is a lot of access to public transportation, but systems can be confusing and hard to use for people with disabilities. Public transit operators, notably within the Ride On bus system, don't always follow the rules and procedures they should when interacting with people with physical disabilities. MetroAccess drivers have similar issues.
- There needs to be more affordable housing. Many people with disabilities are living on extremely low stipends, so they cannot afford the existing “affordable” housing. Support staff for individuals also have lower incomes but need to live near their clients.
- The brick sidewalks are a major impediment to those needing mobility assistance.
- Main Street Apartments/Main Street Connect are great resources to have in Town Center.
- Desire to see more businesses willing to hire individuals with disabilities. Some businesses are, but many do not take advantage. This community is an untapped asset in Rockville.

BLVD 44 Apartment Building

- Public transportation access was a huge draw to live in this area and proves to be a successful way to move around.
- Town Center, particularly Town Square, feels very pedestrian friendly. Enjoy the closure of Gibbs Street.
- Enjoy the variety of events that take place in Town Center.
- The area could benefit from increased density, particularly residential density.
- Would like to see more retail options that aren't tied to food – more activities and hobbies than dining options.
- Desire to see a community center in Town Center.
- Missing an affordable, accessible grocery store and nearby pharmacy to meet daily needs in Town Center.

Arts

- VisArts located in Town Center is a strength for the visual arts community.
- There are a lot of creative people living or doing work in Town Center, but they are not necessarily attached to an entity or organization, so it is easy to miss them.
- Would like to see more arts and entertainment uses located in Town Center. Examples include black box theater, busking areas, galleries, etc.
- Would like to make it easier for community performing artists to make use of Town Square and the stage that exists. Groups have tried in the past, but the process is arduous.
- Most of the performing arts groups associated with Rockville are based at the Fitzgerald Theater and do not have a need to come to Town Center. Would like to see improved physical connections between the Town Center and the Fitzgerald Theater.
- Ideas for art related pop ups in vacant retail spaces, as well as wayfinding/advertising signage promoting the arts community.

LGBTQIA+

- The atmosphere in Town Center is friendly, welcoming, safe and has really nice aesthetic value.
- Metro accessibility is a huge strength of Town Center.
- There are too many first-floor vacancies throughout Town Center. It gives the appearance that the area is failing or unsafe. There needs to be more residential density to support the existing retail.
- Would like to see more free events/reduced barriers for lower income people. Paying to park in Town Center can be a deterrent.
- Desire to see more LGBT events and activities throughout Town Center, outside of June. Pop up events, weekly specialty nights at restaurants, etc.
- Would like to see more visual support of LGBTQIA+ community. Some ideas include pride flag in windows of business, statement art pieces, rainbow crosswalks.

- There's a need for well signed and promoted gender neutral bathrooms in Town Center. This is true for permanent bathrooms, as well as temporary bathrooms for events.

Major Takeaways & Themes

Despite receiving feedback through several different mechanisms, many of the same themes and commentary emerged throughout the entire outreach and engagement phase of the project. Staff view this consistency as a good thing, as it stresses the importance of these comments. Below are the major takeaways and themes that emerged throughout the phase, although it should be noted that the opinions described here are not necessarily unanimous among everyone who provided feedback. The Town Center Master Plan will need to address each of these themes.

Land Use and Housing

- Desire to see more density and housing.
 - Additional residents are needed to support restaurants and retail.
 - Buildings should be tallest close to Rockville Station, but denser redevelopment is desired throughout, especially along MD-355, to the north of Town Square, and along North Washington Street.
 - Reuse vacant commercial office buildings and transform them into residential buildings.
 - Flexibility should be encouraged.
- Need for more below-market rate, income-restricted housing units.

Business and Economic Development

- Strong desire for fewer vacancies.
 - It is okay for the City to use incentives to support business retention/attraction.
- Desire for more restaurant and retail options.
 - Especially retailers that either cater to everyday needs or act as a draw for visitors.
 - Strong desire to see experiential activities in Town Center.
- Pike & Rose, Rio, Downtown Crown in Gaithersburg, and nearby shopping centers are the biggest competitors to Town Center, primarily due to their retail/restaurant options and amenities.
- There is a tentative interest in some sort of entity to support the operations, management, and promotion of Town Center, but businesses are wary of having to pay for such services.

Transportation

- Streets should be redesigned to prioritize safety over speed.
 - Pedestrian safety on MD-355 especially needs to be addressed.
- Easier to find, more accessible parking is more important than parking being free or at lower price point.
- Desire for more and better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
 - Better bike and pedestrian connections with adjacent neighborhoods and Montgomery College
- Strong need for improved wayfinding signage.

- Keep Gibbs Street closed and consider other options to close streets to vehicular traffic, whether permanently or for pop ups/events.
- There is interest in a circulator bus, especially to connect Montgomery College and Town Square.
- Transit accessibility and walkability are huge draws for residents, businesses, and other users.
 - Transit service is generally good but could be better, particularly more frequent bus service.

Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

- Desire to see more parks and greenspace.
 - A dog park at E Middle Lane and Maryland Avenue.
- Would like to see more events in Town Center.
 - Bring the farmer's market and other City events to Town Square.
- Add new amenities within existing parks.
 - Desire for a playground.
- The library is a bigger pull than it often gets credit for.
- Opportunities exist to enhance Promenade Park by adding landscaping, seating areas and lighting so it can be used as a gathering space in addition to a pathway to transit.
- Desire for more landscaping and greenery in streetscapes.

Other

- Public safety can be improved.
- There is a perception that Town Square is the same as Town Center.
- Town Center should be more of a regional destination.

It should be noted that many of these themes also intersect with more global issues in Rockville such as climate change and sustainability, affordability, racial equity, and social justice, etc. Many of these topics are intertwined, and work that impacts one theme often also has other secondary or tertiary impacts on others. As an update to the master plan seeks to address the major takeaways outlined above, it will also need to acknowledge the intersectionality that exists.

Next Steps

Next Steps for the Community Engagement Report

This document will be released for the general public to review in October 2023. During this time, the entirety of the document will be posted on the Engage Rockville site for the project. Additionally, Staff plan to host two public meetings – one in person and one virtual – to share the report takeaways. At these meetings, findings from the report will be presented and meeting attendees will have the opportunity to review and confirm such findings.

After the comment period ends, staff will review all feedback received and make edits to this document accordingly. The new document, with its incorporated edits based on feedback from the community, will be the basis for the draft of the actual Town Center Master Plan. The final version of the Community Engagement Report will be published as an appendix to the Town Center Master Plan.

Next Steps for the Town Center Master Plan

The current project schedule envisions a draft of the Town Center Master Plan will be available for public review in early 2024. The City will post the draft document on the Engage Rockville site, as was done with this community engagement report, and will accept commentary on the draft plan. Staff will continue their extensive outreach efforts to inform the community of the opportunity for review and comment on the plan. These efforts may include but are not limited to: social media promotion of the Engage Rockville website; email blasts to all individuals who have provided feedback on the project to date; tabling at community events and gathering spaces; and presentations to City boards and commissions and stakeholder groups. Additionally, there will be a public process before two different bodies, the Rockville Planning Commission and the Rockville Mayor and Council, during which public comment and testimony on the plan will be accepted.

It is envisioned that the updated Master Plan will be amended into the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*. The State of Maryland requires all comprehensive plans, as well as amendments to comprehensive plans, to undergo a mandatory review by state agencies prior to any public hearing on the plan. During this review, the State will review for consistency with their plans and policies and will provide the City with a list of comments for consideration. The City will follow this procedure and plans to include any comments from the State in documents transmitted to both Planning Commission and Mayor and Council for their respective review and consideration.

The first public body to be presented the draft plan will be the Rockville Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is an appointed body that is responsible for formulating master plans within the City, as well as making decisions on development applications, subdivision plans and project plans. There will likely be five meetings where the Town Center Master Plan will be discussed before the Planning Commission. These meetings include:

- Introduction and Overview of the Draft Plan
- Public Hearing #1
- Public Hearing #2
- Discussion and Instructions to staff based on public hearings
- Approval and Resolution to Transmit to Mayor and Council

All Planning Commission meetings are open to the public. Staff will be promoting the opportunity for members of the public to testify with their thoughts on the Town Center Master Plan at either of the public hearings. It is possible that the Planning Commission may request additional meetings to fully review and recommend the master plan. A schedule of these meeting dates will be determined in early 2024 and posted on the Engage Rockville site, as well as in the Agenda Center on the City's website.

Following the Planning Commission's recommendation to move the Town Center Master Plan forward, the plan will be presented to the Rockville Mayor and Council. As is the case for the Planning Commission, it is estimated that the Town Center Master Plan will be discussed at five meetings before the Mayor and Council:

- Introduction and Overview of the Draft Plan
- Public Hearing #1
- Public Hearing #2
- Discussion and Instructions to staff based on public hearings
- Adoption of the plan

Once adopted by the Mayor and Council, the updated Town Center Master Plan will replace the Planning Area 1 chapter of the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*. From there, staff will begin the process of implementing the recommended actions contained within the Master Plan. All new development applications for the Town Center planning area will be responsible for conforming to the guidelines, standards, and policies recommended within the master plan. Additionally, the adopted Master Plan will assist with internal tasks such as budgeting, staff work plans, Capital Improvement Program (CIP) planning, and inter-agency coordination with state and county agencies.