

## Wyoming [re]Imagined Master Plan Community Workshop Summary Thursday, May 2, 2019



On May 2, 2019 at 6:00p.m., the City of Wyoming hosted a Community Workshop at the Wyoming Library as part of the ongoing planning process for the Wyoming [re]Imagined Master Plan. Approximately 40 community members attended who provided feedback on strengths, issues, and opportunities within Wyoming; improvements they would like to see undertaken; and their long-term vision for the community.

After a presentation to review the planning process and the purpose of the Master Plan, participants were asked to provide input on poster boards located at five stations located throughout the room. Each poster asked a different question about community priorities and facilitators were located at each station to group comments into categories based on topic and summarize key themes. Images of each board are provided at the end of this summary.

Meeting facilitators reported back to the group on key themes and then participants were asked to comment on any aspects of the summary they wished to raise with the group. The input received will be used in preparation for Wyoming [re]Imagined to highlight the existing needs of the community and direct the topics to be addressed by the Master Plan.

## Top Issues & Concerns

### Housing

The most pressing issue discussed was the need for affordable housing to counteract increasing housing costs. Multiple participants shared the need for affordable owner-occupied homes for all income levels. The need for additional mixed use apartments to meet housing demand was also identified with some participants noting that many single family homes are being rented. Other items discussed included issues with property maintenance related to absentee property owners, the concentration of rental properties in certain areas, the need for stricter rental code enforcement, and the need for additional senior housing and community centers in response to an aging population.

### Economic Development

#### Site 36

The redevelopment of Site 36, a 92-acre brownfield site, was a priority identified by several participants. Comments highlighted that the large vacant site fosters community perception that Wyoming is struggling as a community despite consistent positive growth over the last several years. Ideas of how to best utilize the site varied widely, including constructing a community or convention center, attracting a new industrial user, and developing an urban forest. Regardless of use, comments underscored redeveloping the large size of Site 36 and the likely need to divide and repurpose different portions of the site for different uses.

#### Downtown

Another popular topic was the desire for a pedestrian-friendly downtown and mixed use neighborhood centers to better serve local residents. Participants frequently cited the need to fill vacant lots and businesses within Wyoming, with specific examples identified along Division Avenue and 28<sup>th</sup> Street. This also included discussion of Rogers Plaza Town Center and surrounding properties as opportunities for new investment that could revitalize the aging retail area and serve as the location of activity-generating uses such as a food truck park, community center, or farmer's market.



## Mobility & Transportation

Worsening traffic congestion, particularly along US 131 and 54<sup>th</sup> Street, was a common concern. Participants also expressed the desire to lower traffic speeds and to install additional signalized crossings along 28<sup>th</sup> Street to strengthen pedestrian safety and comfort. One participant wished to see less space devoted to underutilized parking lots to establish an urban setting supportive of public transportation, and recommended the use of reflective paving material to reduce heat retention.

There was a strong desire among participants to increase walkability in neighborhoods and provide better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including a more integrated and complete network of bike paths and pedestrian trails. Participants specifically highlighted the need for better east-west connections to the Kent Trails (including from Lemery Park) and an improved bicycle path to travel across the US 131 and M-6 corridors.

## Outdoor Recreation & Natural Environment

While the participants highlighted the parks network as one of the key assets of Wyoming, participants also voiced the need for more parks, community and shared gardens, and improved landscaping. Comments indicated a desire that all residents should be within walking distance to a park and developers should be incentivized to preserve existing trees or plant new trees. Additionally, participants asked that more natural landscaping and greenspace be created in the community and for mowed lawns to be replaced with such.

## City Government & Services

Participants wished for Wyoming's leaders to be less timid or cautious about taking on bold actions for the community. Another concern among participants was a perceived lack of diversity amongst City leaders and staff, which does not reflect the demographics of Wyoming's population. Some participants expressed the desire for a more responsive Police Department and the need to hire more police. In discussing public safety, some comments underscored a need for businesses and residents to work together with the Police Department to keep Wyoming a safe place to live.

## Employment & Education

Several participants identified a perceived lack of local economic opportunities and jobs with sufficient benefits and livable wages as a major issue. Discussion also highlighted an increasing cost of living and number of households facing food insecurity. Comments indicated a desire for more year-round education options, mentoring, and job shadowing opportunities for youth, and vocational/trades education for adults and youth to prepare residents for middle-skill jobs.



## Specific Actions & Projects

Participants indicated specific projects or actions they would like to be seen undertaken as follows:

### Mobility & Transportation

- Develop a connected bike and pedestrian path network and make Wyoming a walkable community (3)
- Increase public transportation
- Alleviate traffic congestion
- Reduce speed limits
- Add more electric vehicle charging stations
- Plow the cul-de-sacs

### Outdoor Recreation & Natural Environment

- Develop more outdoor community gathering spaces (2)
- Build an Environment and Nature Education Center, such as at Buck Creek (2)
- Improve Buck Creek as a public outdoor amenity
- Update Lamar Park with a playground
- Create community gardens

### Education

- Improve schools funding for public education (3)
- Improve before/after school programs (2)
- Provide an adult mentor for every child in our schools

### Identity & Image

- Build City pride through beautification
- Keep the small-town feeling
- Strengthen community identity at a neighborhood level instead of dividing the community by School Districts

### Employment

- Improve job training opportunities, including skilled trade schools (3)
- Increase quality industrial employment opportunities
- Increase higher paying jobs

### City Government

- Staff more public safety officers
- Enforce the zoning ordinance

### Development

- Develop Site 36 (7)
- Build 1,000 one-bedroom apartments with rents under \$500/month
- Encourage and fund senior centers to serve a growing senior population
- Improve the Division Avenue business district

## Primary Strengths & Assets

Participants identified the following as the main strengths and assets of Wyoming:

- Diversity of people and cultures
- Down to earth neighbors
- Small-town feel
- Public housing
- Affordable housing
- Wyoming Housing Commission
- Senior Centers and senior living opportunities
- Parks, green space, and recreation
- Buck Creek Nature Preserve
- Lamar Park
- The Wyoming Library
- Partnerships between the community and businesses
- The shops
- Location near Grand Rapids
- Accessibility to highways
- Numerous churches
- Blue collar culture and working-class people
- Approachable City government and friendly staff at City Hall
- The neighborhoods
- Sense of safety
- Wyoming Public Safety Department
- Public Works and City services
- Plowed sidewalks and road maintenance

