



Wyoming [re]Imagined Master Plan
Steering Committee Orientation & Initiation Meeting Summary
Tuesday, April 23, 2019



On April 24, 2019, the City of Wyoming hosted a Steering Committee Meeting located at the Wyoming Library at 6:00 p.m. The 20-member Steering Committee includes individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds and connections to the community including members from the School Districts, Parks and Recreation Commission, residents, business stakeholders, representatives from partner agencies, such as MDOT and Metro Health, City Council, and Planning Commission. The group will advise, review, and provide feedback throughout the master plan process.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the planning process and solicit input on pressing issues and concerns facing the City, specific projects Steering Committee members would like to see undertaken, and the primary strengths and assets of the community. Through discussion of each topic, strong agreement between the top issues and strengths of Wyoming were revealed, which have been summarized below. The feedback received will be used in the preparation for Wyoming [re]Imagined, the City's new Master Plan, to guide the topics to be addressed in the plan and highlight the existing needs of the community.

Issues & Concerns

Housing Stock

The lack of quality affordable and accessible housing was the top issue identified by the Steering Committee members. Comments highlighted a need for workforce housing that is affordable to low- and middle-income wage earners that would allow them to live close to their jobs. In addition, Steering Committee members discussed a need for senior housing and to maintain the overall quality of Wyoming's existing housing stock .

Image & Identity

Many Steering Committee comments also centered on the questions like “Who are we?” and, “What is our Identity?” Members voiced that Wyoming lacks a strong identity and a story to tell about the culture and people of the community. This was connected to the need to improve the outside perception of the City as well as unify neighborhoods and eliminate notions of north versus south. While schools are viewed as a strength within the community overall, the presence of seven school districts was also identified as a dividing factor within the community with residents identifying themselves by school district rather than as Wyoming residents.

Poor or weak image by outsiders was also highlighted when discussing identify. Comments identified a need to promote the City as an attractive destination and pointed to a lack of a destination or defining feature that distinguishes Wyoming. Related to these elements, Steering Committee members expressed the wish for placemaking and the beautification of the City.

Also related to community identify was the issue of community diversity. Steering Committee members identified Wyoming's diverse population as a key strength, but emphasized a need for further engagement to ensure community participation is representative of the City's demographics. This was also extended to a desire to see broader community representation and increased diversity within City government as well as in the employee makeup of corporate citizens and partner organizations.

Land Use & Development

Another major issue was the vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial sites within Wyoming, including along 28th Street and Division Avenue, and at Site 36. This coincides with the indicated need to sustain economic activity and development while promoting smart growth principles. Smart growth was also discussed in terms of cultivating a Downtown, a city feature residents continue to wish for, to create a gathering place as well as an urban anchor for planning. Steering Committee members also wished to encourage and incentivize mixed-used development within Wyoming, improve its aged built environment, particularly in the north, and promote density within future growth plans.

Economy & Employment

Revitalizing the local economy and increasing employment opportunities were highlighted as key concerns. Steering Committee members voiced the need for equity in hiring for middle-skill and high-wage jobs, increased promotion of available job opportunities, and ensuring employment diversity. Members also expressed concern for the loss of manufacturing (such as at Site 36) and traditional retail in certain areas (such as Rogers Plaza and 28th Street). Improving the role of neighborhood business districts in attracting new businesses was also mentioned as an issue.

Transportation & Connectivity

Traffic patterns and maintenance of roadway infrastructure in relation to growth and congestion were identified as concerns. Steering Committee members hoped for the expansion of a low-cost transportation system including transit while creating a balance between pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles within Wyoming. The need for a complete bike trail system, better walkability in commercial areas, and improved connectivity between neighborhoods were also highlighted.

Services & Amenities

The Steering Committee discussed the need to improve existing community services and amenities as well as create new services to enhance residents' living experience within Wyoming. This includes providing equal and diverse school opportunities, affordable quality childcare options, and a community resource portal for residents to network. The group also shared the desire to increase family financial literacy through adult education and workshops as well as to create a robust local food system that is green, nutritious, fair, affordable, and accessible. Preserving Wyoming's robust public park system, strengthening the arts within the community, and maintaining quality public works and public safety services were other desires identified.



Specific Projects & Actions

Steering Committee members indicated specific projects or actions they would like to see occur in Wyoming as follows:

Housing

- Develop affordable and quality housing for residents that represent a mix of socioeconomic statuses, cultures, and ethnicities.
- Promote investment and create incentives to improve and maintain quality rental properties.

Image & Identity

- Tackle the identity issue as a community-wide initiative.
- Brand the City by developing a local and outside image of who and what Wyoming is.
- Make Wyoming beautiful.
- Celebrate rather than criticize the City's identity, such as through community events.
- Unify the City. "Create one Wyoming."
- Create a pilot project that integrates the best planning principles and celebrates the community, such as mixed income, mixed use, and placemaking.
- Create a task force to celebrate diversity in business, residents, art, and education.
- Incorporating tree canopy as a component of the City's culture and community art as storytelling.
- Conduct a diversity analysis to "define, dissect, and discover" about businesses, elected officials, school officials, and the population.
- Form a business façade improvement program for commercial and retail corridors that create safety through design.
- Connect neighborhoods while cultivating their unique identities.
- Give bigger voices to citizens to represent the diversity.
- Make neighborhood districts destinations by leveraging existing tools of the community.

Land Use & Development

- Develop ways to incentivize the redevelopment of major commercial corridors, industrial areas, and residential neighborhoods.
- Create a pilot project that demonstrates best practices for development along Division Avenue and 28th Street.
- Develop a Civic Center on 28th Street to serve as a community gathering place.
- Revitalize 28th Street between Burlingame and Clyde Park avenues.
- Create unique neighborhood identities and hubs for gathering spaces (e.g., redevelopment of Division Avenue and Burton Street).
- Develop mixed use, walkable, and sustainable developments, including affordable housing.
- Redevelop underutilized and vacant properties.
- Create a city center.
- Develop industrial uses along Grand River and give residents access to waterfront.
- Be open to different types of land use types.
- Incentivize and invest in mixed use developments for urban farming and local produce entrepreneurship.

Economy & Employment

- Create specialized training opportunities for those entering the workforce, such as apprenticeships.
- Attract a new industry to Site 36 as a major employment opportunity.
- Attract a retail anchor store to the old Studio 28 site.
- Bring in jobs which will build schools and housing.
- Develop a downtown business district.

Transportation & Connectivity

- Preserve or rehabilitate existing streets, bridges, and public utilities.
- Park improvements with bike paths and connectivity between neighborhoods.
- Improve neighborhood connectivity by providing pedestrian and bike paths along corridors that connect activity centers and community assets.

Services & Amenities

- Improve parks and provide bike path connectivity between them.
- Merge all seven School Districts or redefine the borders.
- Improve school system.
- Perform health equity assessment and programming.
- Create grants available to families for childcare options and for training programs for staff of the facilities.
- Build water parks.
- Develop cultural centers.
- Improve outreach and community engagement for citizens.
- Increase awareness of community organizations and resources that are available to residents.

Strengths & Assets

Steering Committee members identified the following as the main strengths and assets of Wyoming (repeated comments have been marked with their frequency):

- Diversity. (10)
- The people. (6)
- Accessible and diverse park and recreation system. (5)
- Public works and services. (4)
- Location. (3)
- UM/Metro Health for health care access. (3)
- Potential, such as for parks, public spaces, people, public safety, places, and properties. (2)
- Proximity to Grand Rapids as a first-tier suburb. (2)
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff. (2)
- Public safety. (2)
- New developments.
- A community that is committed to improvement.
- Vacant land available for redevelopment and job creation.
- Developers that work hard to attain affordable housing.
- New development to the South and aged areas to the north that can be leveraged for future growth.
- Shoreline of Lake Michigan.
- The urban, residential, and rural identity that should be celebrated.
- No areas of significant blight.
- Hope.
- Size.
- Residents who are "all-in" - born, raised, and no plans to leave.
- Community member's grit.
- Diverse businesses and neighborhoods.
- Multigenerational community.
- Room for everyone.
- Neighborhood areas.
- Surrounded by other communities that we use to our advantage.
- Water system.
- Stewardship.
- Roads.
- Police and fire services.
- Proactive government.
- High quality School Districts.
- Parks and recreation events.
- Restaurants.
- Community events.
- Marge's Donut Den.
- Senior center.