

## **Building Idea Summary Memo**

### **Final Results, Round 1 Public Engagement**

November 2023

This document summarizes the results of the first round of public engagement for *Thrive!*, a comprehensive plan for the Town of Plainfield, Indiana. The first round of public engagement was branded as *Building Ideas* and was designed to capture big ideas from the Plainfield community. Community members were invited to share their thoughts about the Town through a combination of in-person and online opportunities. The ideas collected and analysis conducted thus far will be used to create specific comprehensive plan recommendations (policies, programs, and projects) for Plainfield.

This report summarizes the results of the *Building Ideas* engagement events that were conducted from August 17 to September 26, 2023. Input has been gathered in the following ways:

- 1. Stakeholder interviews.** Over 10 meetings with groups of four to six people who have specific expertise on a topic (i.e., parks and recreation, housing, business, development, public service, arts, history, etc.), were interviewed. The planning team asked participants to provide background information on themselves, things that are or are not working well in Town, key issues that need to be addressed in the future, and groups or individuals that should be reached out to during the planning process.
- 2. Online preliminary engagement.** To start building momentum and promoting the process, the planning team posted two questions on the project website, *ThrivePlainfield.com*, to initiate the collection of ideas and get people comfortable with submitting their input.
- 3. In-person engagement.** An in-person workshop was held on August 17 at MADE@Plainfield. After a brief presentation that provided the community some background information on the planning process, the participants worked in small groups to discuss two critical questions and an assets and opportunities mapping activity.
- 4. Pop-up events.** Participants were intercepted during community events – Farmer’s Market on August 23 and 30, and the Quaker Day Community Festival on September 16. The questions were identical to the in-person workshop but reformatted to accommodate the pop-up style format. The planning team and Steering Committee volunteers facilitated the events.
- 5. Building Ideas online portal.** Online activities identical to the in-person workshop and pop-up events were available from August 18 to September 26 on the project website, *ThrivePlainfield.com*.

The memo includes the following components:

- A. Purpose
- B. Outreach and Publicity
- C. Findings

- D. Demographic Participation
- E. Next Steps

## A. Purpose

The Town of Plainfield launched *Thrive!* A process to create a new comprehensive plan, expected to be completed by Spring of 2024. The last plan was completed in 2016. Since the last plan, Plainfield has experienced significant change and new development. The downtown has transformed, and the Town has experienced single family (single detached homes) and multi-family (townhouse and apartments) residential growth. Now is the time to update the plan to reflect the changes the Town is experiencing and set a positive course of action for the future. One of the key components of the planning process is community insight. Through the first round of public engagement, multiple opportunities were provided to those interested in the future of Plainfield. Reaching geographic areas and demographic groups that are normally less likely to engage was also a priority.

Overall, the purpose of the events was to:

- **Inform** the public about the *Thrive!* comprehensive planning process.
- **Educate** the public about the process.
- **Gather initial insight and ideas** that will inform the new plan.
- **Make a good impression** so that people will want to stay engaged.

A second round of engagement will be held in 2024 to test recommendations informed by additional technical analysis and input collected in round 1.

## B. Outreach and Publicity

Extensive outreach and publicity were conducted to spread the word about the opportunities to participate in the first round of engagement. The planning team capitalized on existing networks through groups, organizations, religious and faith communities, home owners associations, local clubs, etc. The *Thrive!* Steering Committee played a key role in spreading the word across the community to communicate the importance of this opportunity. Outreach and publicity included the following:

- Distribution of printed rack cards, flyers, posters, banner, etc.
- Town's social media.
- MailChimp (email blasts).
- Utility bill inserts.
- Emails – stakeholders and organizations.
- Targeted outreach by Steering Committee members.

## C. Findings

This section summarizes the input collected from the stakeholder interviews, online pre-liminary engagement questions, and the *Building Ideas* events (in-person and online).

## Stakeholder Interviews

The stakeholder interviews included discussion of big picture questions that should be addressed in the comprehensive plan. A summary of ideas from each meeting are provided below.

### Community Facilities, Amenities and Quality of Life (private and public)

- Utilize existing assets such as the Hendricks Live Performing Arts Center, aquatics center, and parks and trails to attract people into Town and provide more things to do.
- Continue to foster the Town's philanthropic nature relative to the arts.
- Make activities and services more accessible to the Town's changing demographics (e.g., multilingual).
- Find ways to grow existing arts and culture programs, with a focus on youth, public art, and beautification (e.g., expanding mural program).
- Improve communications and awareness-raising about activities in the Town so more people know about and take advantage of them.

### Economy

- Continue to lean into advantages, including interstate access and the airport.
- Develop more office space throughout Town and in the downtown area, especially Class A space.
- Prepare for the transition from logistics to e-commerce. The logistics industry is becoming more advanced and reliant on technology, and it is getting harder to find workers to fill those jobs.
- Provide quality, affordable childcare options; lack of childcare is an impediment to many workers.
- Continue to cultivate a business-friendly environment to sustain Plainfield's reputation as a place where people want to locate and operate a business.
- Better capture the business of people coming into the area via the airport.

### Education

- Remain competitive with surrounding communities and maintain high quality education; the high quality school system is currently a major draw.
- Maintain educational assets such as MADE@Plainfield which operate more than a classroom – research trade needs and train students with skillsets.
- Improve connections between schools and businesses and training providers (e.g., connect students to trade fairs to expose students to opportunities).
- Improve ancillary services that help support educational attainment, including transportation and childcare; increase affordable housing so people can live in the community to take advantage of educational and training opportunities.
- Focus on training for higher paying “jobs of the future,” such as in supply chain/logistics work (Hendricks Logistics Center Partnership as a model), life sciences, and healthcare.
- Find opportunities to teach the importance of giving back to the community.

### Fiscal Impacts and Economic Development Tools

- Explore impact fees.
- Consider TIF Districts to support certain types of desired development (e.g., denser, mixed-use and multifamily).

## Governance

- Continue to ensure that Plainfield remains as well-managed as it is today; the Town benefits greatly from thoughtful, proactive planning and a focus on providing a high quality level of service in many areas, including assisting developers and business owners with things they need to be successful and contribute positively.
- Improve intergovernmental cooperation so communities can plan more collaboratively for growth and change.
- Improve asset management and capital planning.

## Housing

- Advocate for a range of housing options and price points to help accommodate workers (most people who work in Plainfield do not live in Town) and people at different life stages.
- Realize the Town's potential for multifamily housing to support the workforce; there is not enough workforce housing currently.

## Land Use and Development

- Strategize balance for land use planning to address land left for development – developers have a desire to develop different types of projects and more logistics industries are wanting to locate in Plainfield.
- Address growth towards the south as the Town is landlocked to the north.
- Develop density responsibly while contributing to economic growth and commercial opportunities such as more restaurants, shops, etc.
- Focus on property management and making sure that whatever is developed is the best use of that land.
- Find ways to support the development of retail, not just housing, to create more desirable neighborhoods.
- Focus on downtown, building upon success and making more improvements to public areas.
- Facilitate development of amenities such as grocery stores and walkability as new development moves forward.
- Help educate community members that many people do not want large lot sizes and there are advantages to the Town to build more densely in some locations.
- Set a standard for new development to make sure it is compatible with historic buildings in areas such as downtown.
- Expand upon grant programs for property improvements in commercial areas, such as the Main Street Plainfield Facade Grant Program.
- Consider additional historic designations to protect important historic areas, but balance this with allowance for compatible new construction.

## Parks and Recreation

- Incorporate plans to develop a 2,000-acre regional park.
- Further improve and expand upon the Town's excellent trail system, including addressing gaps.
- Consider use of utility service line corridors for more trailways.
- Continue to foster collaboration between developers and the Town so that developers can allow/build trailways as they develop.
- Provide more recreational opportunities for teens and adults; currently most are focused on children and seniors.

- Plan for more parks and trails in the west as development moves in that direction.
- Provide facilities for sports growing in popularity (e.g., cricket).

#### Public Services and Infrastructure

- Continue and expand service levels (i.e., fire and police), and maintain high quality customer service as population grows.
- Ensure strong infrastructure is in place when considering redevelopment projects.
- Maintain proactive sewer planning; Plainfield is more advanced in planning for sewer than almost any community in the state.
- Continue to work well with developers as the Town currently does with an effective approach to cost sharing and planning.
- Encourage densification in appropriate locations for less burden on existing infrastructure.
- Capitalize on the fact that Plainfield has public transportation for development of affordable housing; improve transportation where possible to support it.
- Provide more truck parking.
- Hotels becoming extended stay pose some safety concerns.
- Fund and staff emergency services appropriately as the Town grows.

#### Online Preliminary Engagement

To get people comfortable with sharing ideas and build momentum for the Thrive! process, two preliminary engagement questions were made available online at the launch of the project.

1. What do you love about Plainfield?
  - Community members and values.
  - Development of the downtown.
  - Entertainment and activities (food, shopping, events).
  - Family-friendly atmosphere.
  - Low taxes.
  - Mobility and freight (i.e., airport).
  - Proximity to Indianapolis and major roadways.
  - Quality of schools.
  - Safe place to live.
  - Small town feel.
  - Town leadership.
  - Trails and park system.
2. What would you like to see in Plainfield in the future?
  - Arts and culture.
    - Promote Town identity.
    - Add public art from local artists.
    - Community diversity and inclusion.
    - Cultural events.
  - Business attraction.
    - Support for new businesses to establish in Town.
    - Fewer warehouses.
  - Entertainment and activity options.

- Family-friendly and older adult friendly activities (miniature golf, batting cages).
  - Outdoor activities (canoeing, kayaking along White Lick Creek).
- Enforced property care and maintenance.
- Environmental sustainability.
  - Multi-modal trails.
  - Alternative energy sources.
  - Environmental and open space preservation.
- Expansion or improvement of existing amenities.
  - Aquatics center to allow year-round space for members.
  - Additional green spaces.
  - Modern playgrounds.
  - Extended trails in the east and west direction.
  - Community gardens.
- Housing Options.
  - Different housing types.
- Improved traffic conditions
  - Wider roads.
- Maintaining Town Character.
  - Architectural buildings in the downtown that reflect character.
- Mobility options.
  - Multi-use trail over US-40.
  - Public transit.
- Retail and Commercial uses.
  - Specialty/high end grocery stores (Whole Foods, Trader Joe's).
  - Unique or high end restaurants and retail.
  - Local shops.
- Sports amenities.
  - Lights at ball fields.
  - Hockey rinks.
  - Upgraded sports fields.

## **Building Ideas Events**

During the Building Ideas events, two big picture questions were asked to the public:

1. What do you wish the Town would focus on in the next 10-20 years?
2. What is the biggest challenge this new Comprehensive Plan should address?

Below is a summary of the common themes and ideas that emerged from responses to the two questions.

### Activities and things to do

- Providing more restaurants and cafes.
- Adding more community events and for all ages (i.e., youth, older adults).

### Business attraction/retention

- Creating a destination for businesses and including infrastructure to support them.
- Supporting small and local businesses.
- Increasing tax base with more employment uses (not just warehouses).

- Diversifying the downtown with more businesses and commercial uses.

#### Culture and heritage

- Celebrating the Town's heritage.
- Preserving the Town's history.

#### Growth management

- Ensuring infrastructure, schools and public services have the capacity to accommodate growth.
- Limiting expansion of warehouse uses.
- Maintaining the small-town atmosphere.
- Slowing down development of multi-family housing.

#### Higher quality development

- Beautifying major gateways/corridors.
- Improving sites and buildings (i.e., mall, vacant storefronts).
- Adding more mix of uses and amenities.
- Allowing for more higher end commercial uses (i.e., restaurants and shopping).
- Revitalizing downtown neighborhoods.

#### Housing options

- Allowing different housing options and price points.

#### Safety

- Implementing safety features (i.e., lighting).
- Reducing crime.
- Providing safe ways to walk and cross busy streets (i.e., US-40).
- Ensuring safe routes for students.

#### Traffic and road management

- Managing and upgrading road infrastructure (i.e., Stafford Road).
- Managing traffic congestion as the Town grows.

#### Mobility

- Creating walkable places.
- Connecting areas (neighborhoods and developments) with sidewalks.
- Accommodating mobility options (i.e., bicycle, multi-use trails, public transportation).

#### Parks and amenities

- Extending multi-use trails to other areas of Town.

#### Preservation

- Developing less and preserving agriculture.
- Hosting community events such as spring-cleaning days.
- Maintaining open and green spaces, and landscaping (i.e., trees).

## Assets and Opportunities Mapping

Participants were asked to identify locations that are an opportunity or an asset. These locations were identified using a green and red sticker dot, placed on a map. An accompanying comment card or group recording sheet was provided to indicate why those places were an asset or an opportunity.



**Assets** are places you would like to see replicated and reflect well on the community. Places you're proud to show visitors.

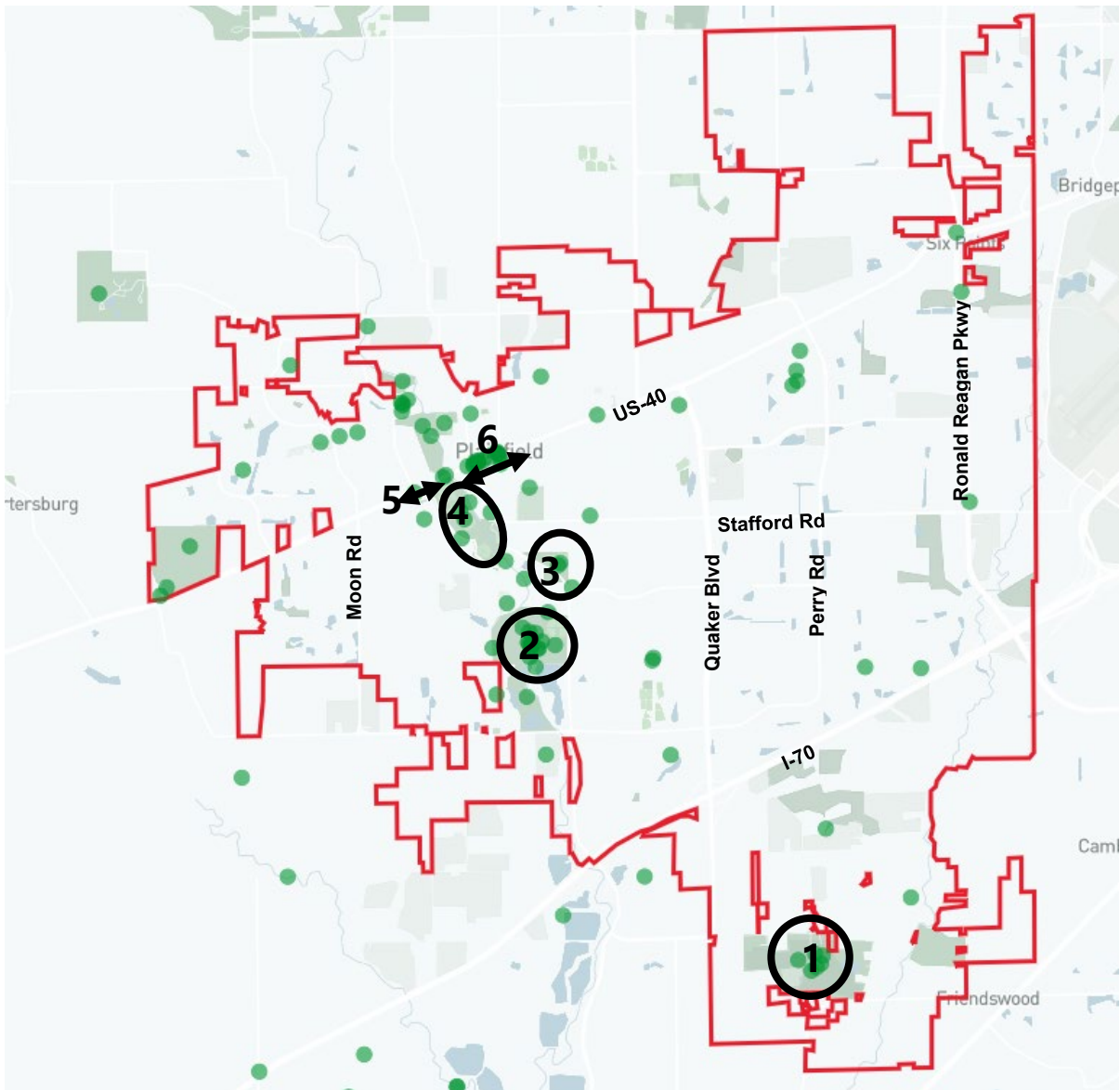


**Opportunities** are places you feel are undesirable and need improvement. Places you would not take visitors.

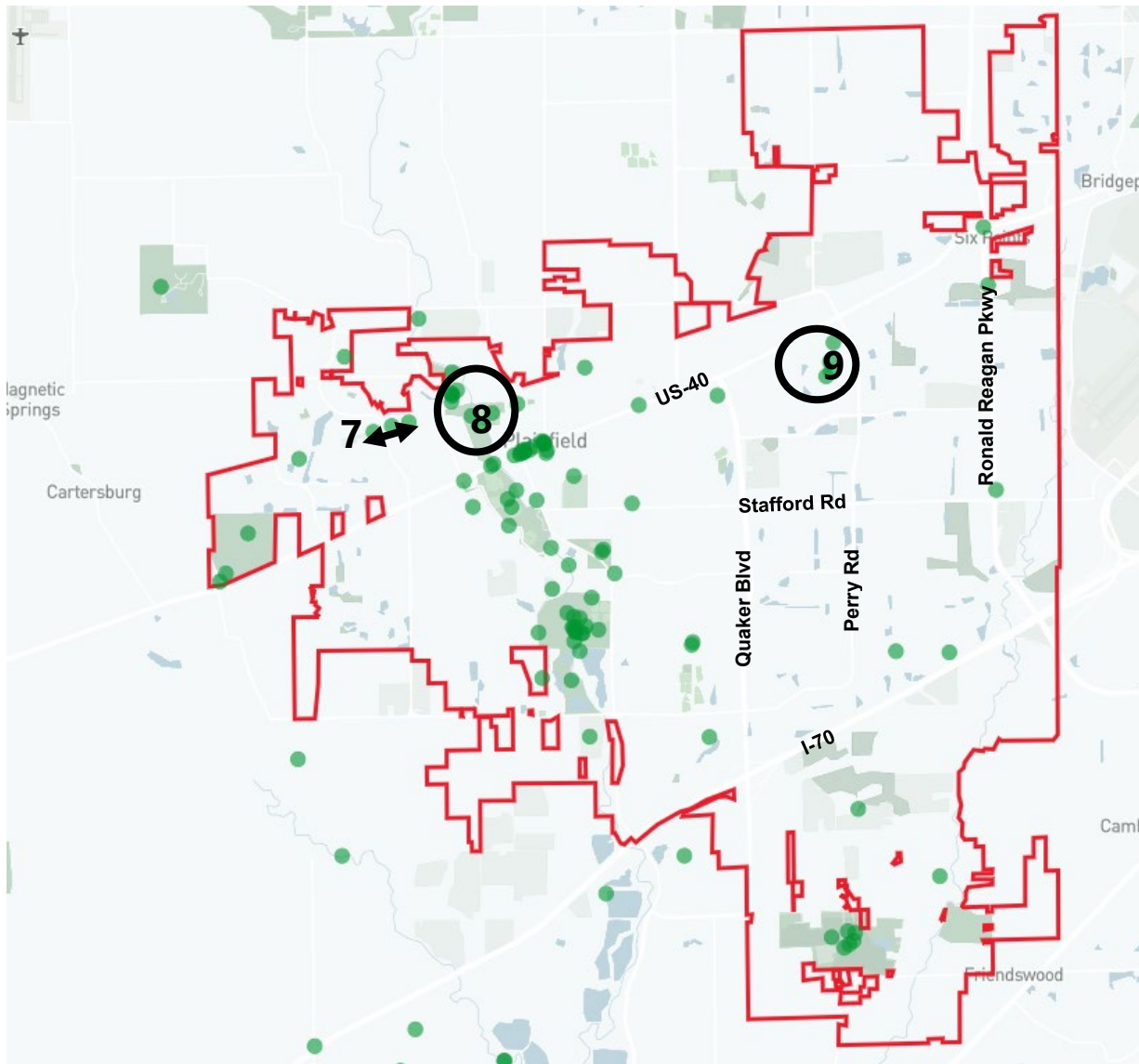
### Assets

Location	Why it is an asset?
1. Sodalis Nature Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A destination.</li> <li>• Includes learning and nature centers.</li> <li>• Includes trails.</li> <li>• A beautiful place.</li> <li>• Protects wildlife (bats).</li> </ul>
2. Hummel Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great amenities (playground, trails, splash pads).</li> <li>• Includes lakes and creeks.</li> <li>• A variety of outdoor activities.</li> </ul>
3. Swinford Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes sports amenities (pickleball and baseball).</li> </ul>
4. Al and Jan Barker Sports Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides sports fields and family friendly amenities.</li> </ul>
5. Trail System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to parks.</li> <li>• Trail system connects to parks.</li> </ul>
6. Downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becoming a destination.</li> <li>• Maintains small town feel and historic character.</li> <li>• Accessible and walkable.</li> <li>• Includes the cultural and performing arts centers.</li> <li>• Supports small businesses.</li> <li>• Hosts the farmers' market.</li> </ul>



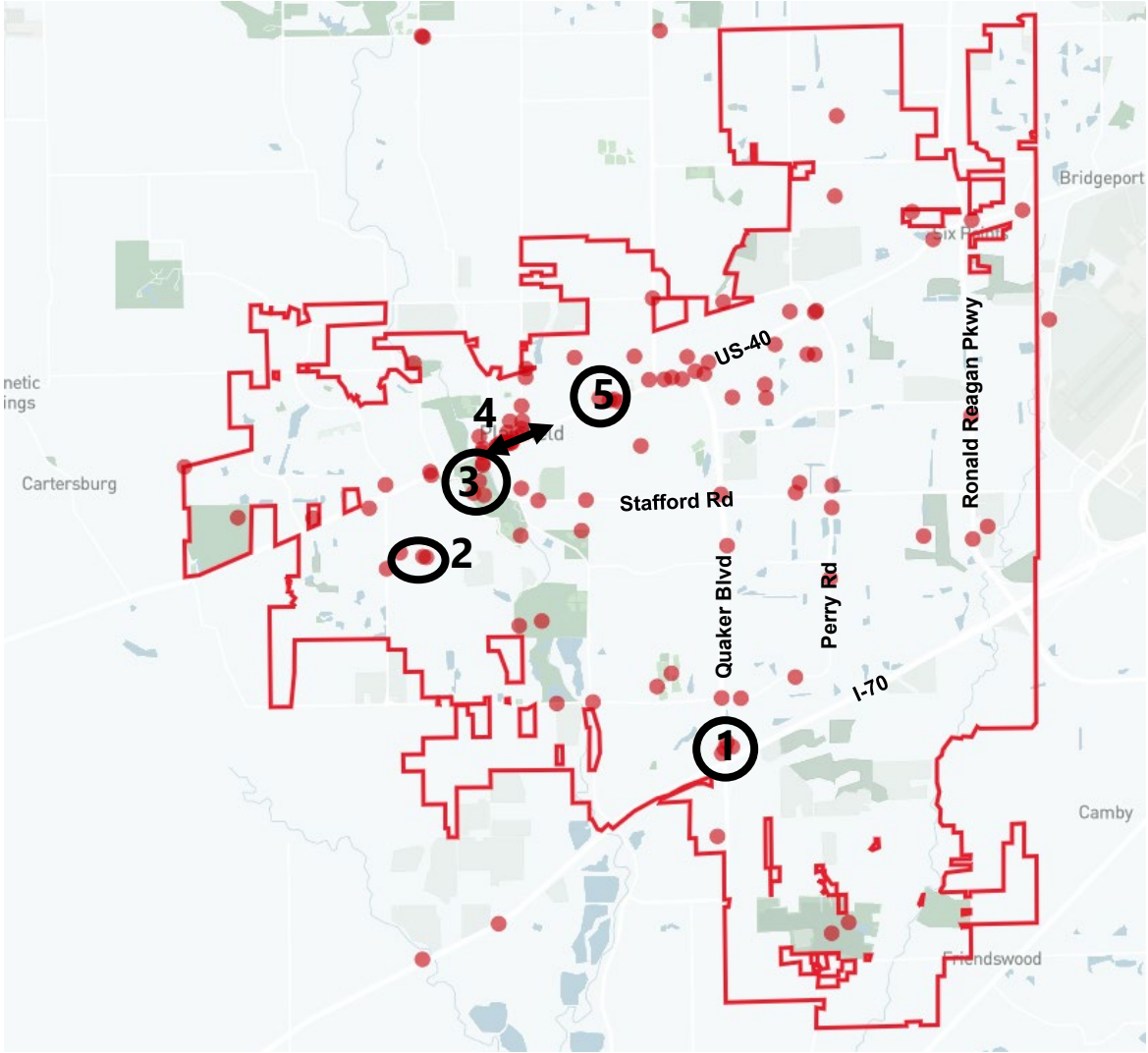


Location	Why it is an asset?
7. Vandalia Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes nice trails.</li> </ul>
8. Recreation Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of recreational activities and amenities.</li> <li>• Inclusive activities (water park, pools, gym, parks, trails, recreation center).</li> </ul>
9. Perry Crossing Mall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of retail options.</li> <li>• Provides a gathering spot.</li> </ul>

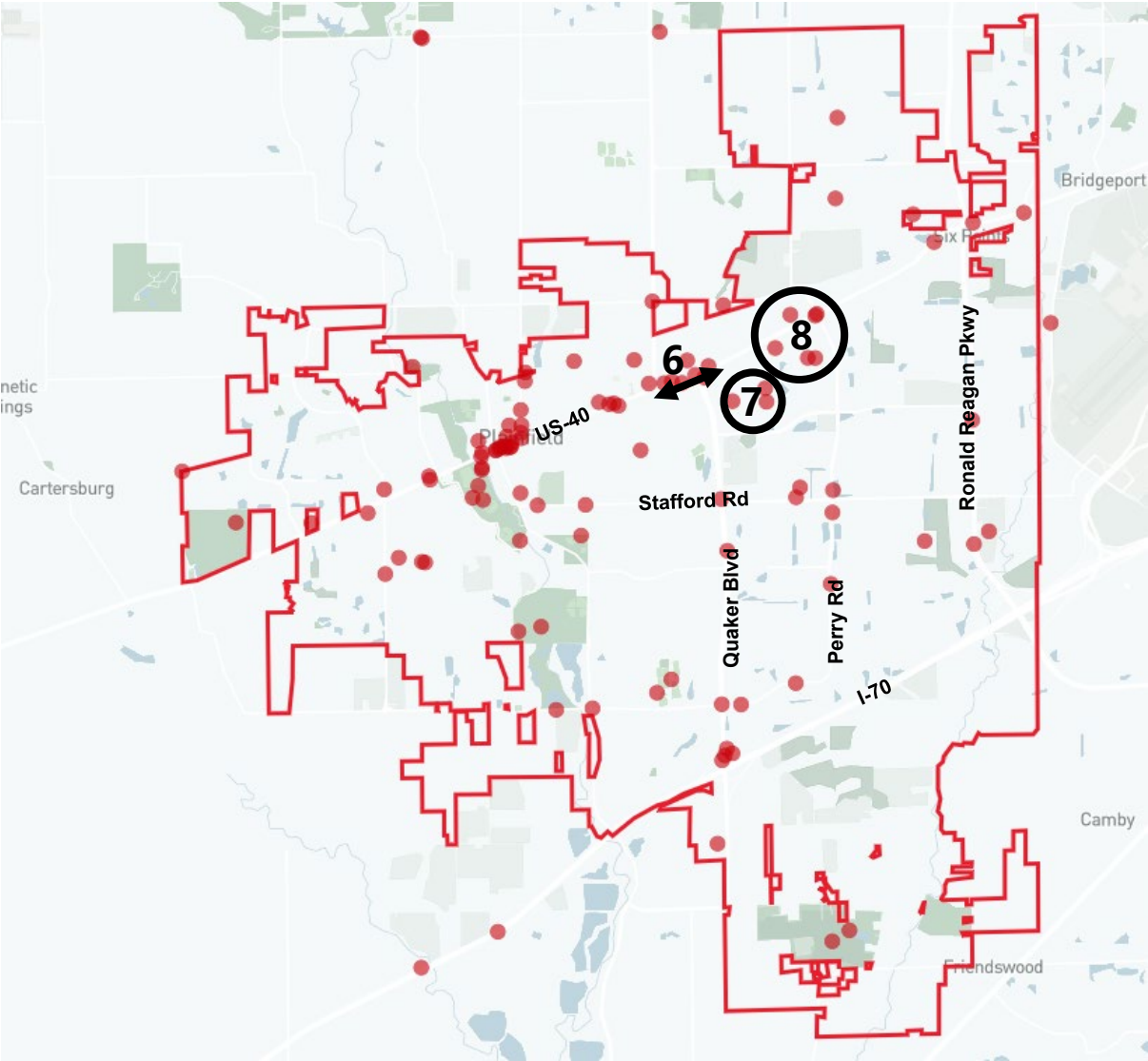


Location	Why it is an opportunity?
1. Quaker Blvd. & I-70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian walkability and safety.</li> <li>• Create a gateway entry into Town.</li> <li>• Update older hotels.</li> <li>• Utilize vacant buildings (i.e., vacant restaurants).</li> </ul>
2. Correctional Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility is visible.</li> <li>• Prime area for green space.</li> </ul>
3. Al and Jan Barker Sports Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain turf and sports fields.</li> <li>• Address invasive plants.</li> </ul>

<p>4. Downtown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add more entertainment, dining, and retail.</li> <li>• Revitalize older neighborhoods, buildings and sites, older buildings are an environmental hazard.</li> <li>• Better utilization of existing properties/buildings.</li> <li>• Improve older facades.</li> <li>• Improve pedestrian walkability.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Commercial Sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve large, blank building facades.</li> <li>• Renovate dilapidated houses and buildings.</li> <li>• Improve visual aesthetics.</li> <li>• Apply design and building uniformity standards.</li> </ul>



Location	Why it is an opportunity?
6. E. Main St. & Quaker Blvd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety for pedestrians.</li> <li>• Improve eyesore properties.</li> <li>• Limit multi-family development.</li> </ul>
7. Gladden Farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease crime.</li> </ul>
8. Various commercial properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe environment for younger demographics.</li> <li>• Address homelessness.</li> <li>• Improve dilapidated strip mall and buildings.</li> </ul>



To view all map comments visit:  
[Thriveplainfield.com/building-ideas-composite/](https://thriveplainfield.com/building-ideas-composite/)

## D. Demographic Participation

### Activity Satisfaction

Out of those who responded to the question, 96% of participants were comfortable sharing their input on the activities. People generally indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to provide input and provided positive reviews on the activities and facilitation.

### Who we heard from

Round 1 produced 424 unique comments from approximately 160 people. About half of that input is from an in-person workshop and pop-up event, and half are from the online activity portal. Participants who are 45–54-year-olds and 65+ year olds, identify as white, and those with a bachelor's and master's degrees were overrepresented. Most participants were from districts 2 and 5; and most people heard about this opportunity through word of mouth and emails.

Race/Ethnicity	Round 1 Percentage	Plainfield US Demographics
Asian	3%	4%
Black / African American	0%	9%
Native American	1%	1%
White	87%	78%
Two or more races	5%	6%
Other	4%	2%
Hispanic	2%	6%

Age	Round 1 Percentage	Plainfield US Demographics
Under 15	0%*	13%
18-24	4%	14%
25-34	5%	13%
35-44	16%	15%
45-54	27%	12%
55-64	16%	12%
65 or Above	32%	15%

\* Not a target this round.

Highest level of education	Round 1 Percentage	Plainfield US Demographics
Less than a high school diploma	2%	6%
High school diploma	13%	33%
Some college	12%	22%
Associate's Degree	7%	8%
Bachelor's Degree	38%	20%
Master's Degree / Ph.D.	27%	12%

<b>Residence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
District 1	8%
District 2	24%
District 3	14%
District 4	8%
District 5	21%
I live outside of Plainfield	14%
Other	12%

This summary memo will be shared on the project website and will be used to inform planning for the next round of engagement.