

## Community Choices Summary Memo

### Round 2 Public Engagement

May 21, 2024

This document summarizes the results of the second round of public engagement for *Thrive!*, a comprehensive plan for the Town of Plainfield, Indiana. The second round of public engagement was branded as *Community Choices* and was designed to test the potential direction for plan recommendations and the future character and land use map. Community members were invited to share their thoughts about the Town through a combination of in-person and online opportunities. The ideas collected will be used to help inform the draft plan for Plainfield.

This report summarizes the results of the *Building Ideas* engagement events that were conducted from April 8 to May 20, 2024. This report has been updated from its interim status and made available to the public after the conclusion of this second round of engagement.

Input for this round of engagement was gathered in the following ways:

- 1. In-person engagement.** A broadly promoted, in-person workshop was held on April 10 at MADE@Plainfield. After a brief presentation by the planning team that provided background information on the planning process, participants were able to view and comment on display boards with a draft character and land use map (Activity A) and draft key plan recommendations (Activity B). They were also asked to fill out an exit questionnaire to provide information about how they learned about the opportunity to participate and information about themselves (to be used by the team to compare to census data and determine how representative participants were of the Town's demographics).
- 2. Community choices online portal.** Online activities identical to the in-person workshop were made available through the project website, *ThrivePlainfield.com*. This memo includes all input collected through the online portal until its closure on May 20.

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 Summer 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. Reaching geographic areas and demographic groups that are normally less likely to engage was a priority.

Overall, the purpose of all rounds of engagement is 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.

Through the first round of public engagement held in late-summer and early-fall 2023, multiple opportunities were provided to those interested in the future of Plainfield to answer big picture questions about the future. Through the second round of engagement summarized in this memo, participants were asked to review and comment on preliminary draft materials that might be integrated into the comprehensive plan. A third round of engagement will be held in June and July 2024 to reveal the draft plan and collect final input. This will also be an opportunity to celebrate the work that has been completed and to lay a foundation and build excitement for implementation.

## **B. Outreach and Publicity**

Outreach and publicity were conducted to spread the word about the opportunities to participate in the second round of engagement. The planning team built upon momentum from the first round of engagement and, with assistance from staff and the Steering Committee, capitalized on existing networks through groups, organizations, religious and faith communities, homeowners' associations, local clubs, etc. Outreach and publicity included the following:

- Distribution of printed rack cards, flyers, posters, etc.
- Town's social media.
- Water bills.
- MailChimp (email blasts, including to participants in the first round).
- Emails from Steering Committee members to selected stakeholders and organizations.
- Presence and distribution of materials at Easter Scramble (March 23) and Solar Eclipse Event (April 8).
- Other targeted outreach by staff and Steering Committee members.

## **C. Findings**

This section summarizes the input collected through the *Community Choices* events in-person and online opportunities for engagement. As the same materials were shared for comment both at the workshop and online, results were aggregated.

### **Activity A: Character and Land Use Map**

Participants were asked to comment on a draft future character and land use map. A summary of comments is provided below.

- General support for the direction of the map.
- Concern about locations where industrial development is adjacent to residential uses.

- Desire to protect natural resources (trees, White Lick Creek, etc.).
- Desire for more green space, especially as residential areas expand.
- As residential uses expand, concern about infrastructure / traffic congestion.
- Desire for more mixed-use areas as residential areas expand.
- Concern about impact of expanded industrial or tech flex areas.

## **Activity B: Draft Key Recommendations**

Participants were asked to provide ratings for and comments on draft key recommendations for the plan. Ratings were on a scale of 1-5 where 1 was strongly against and 5 was strongly in support. The rating system was used to provide a general indication of community perspectives; it was not designed as a litmus test for whether any specific recommendation should be carried forward in the plan. Comments on goals and recommendations are most important in helping the planning team assess whether recommendations might warrant changes or reconsideration. All recommendations except one (see bullet below) received an average rating above 3, representing general support for most recommendations. Notably, several recommendations did have a wide distribution of ratings indicating differences of opinion among participants.

A summary of comments by goal is provided below.

### **Goal A: Create attractive and distinctive places.**

- Recommendation A.1, *Pursue higher density infill and redevelopment in selected locations as identified in the future character and land use map in this plan*, was the recommendation that received the lowest rating of any draft recommendation at 2.90 out of 5. Comments provided on this recommendation indicate that higher density residential development is associated with more strain on schools, infrastructure, and emergency services, as well as loss of farmland. Some also indicated that they do not desire to see low-income housing or apartments in Plainfield. Others expressed concern about losing Plainfield's small town feel and negatively impacting its aesthetics. However, some participants noted that higher density can help support multiple centers of activity that can benefit community residents and reduce sprawl, traffic, and strain on Town resources.
- Participants expressed general support for quality materials and building aesthetics, but a recognition that this can be difficult to achieve.
- Some participants expressed support for preserving historic neighborhoods and rural areas.

### **Goal B: Advance strategic economic growth and prosperity.**

- Some participants said that if the Shops at Perry Crossing and other commercial areas are to expand, the way this happens and the design quality, as well as not detracting from already developed areas, are important.
- Some participants made a connection between economic development and workforce development recommendations and a need for improved public transit and affordable housing.
- While some participants recognized that Plainfield needs more affordable childcare options, a few expressed concerns that local government would take leadership for this. Some noted that larger employers could play a bigger role in this.

### **Goal C: Leverage and enhance assets.**

- The highest-rated recommendations under any goal fall under Goal C and are focused on preserving and maintaining parks and historic resources, including Recommendation C.1, *Ensure new development is well-served by area parks*, and Recommendation C.2, *Establish standards through the Zoning Ordinance and other policies and guidelines for new development to make sure it is compatible with historic buildings in areas such as downtown*. Most community members who commented on these recommendations strongly supported the preservation and expansion of Plainfield’s parks and trails, indicating that they are some of the community’s greatest assets.
- The look and feel of downtown, and its scale and pattern of development, are assets that participants want to see preserved. Some indicated that this is more important than individual historic buildings and that there could be room for some smaller-scale housing types (duplexes, triplexes, etc.), while others strongly expressed a desire to not see higher density housing.
- Some comments connected the idea of higher density in certain locations to a need to provide adequate parkland and open space.

**Goal D: Expand mobility options and connectivity networks.**

- Several participants indicated a need for more information / further study to determine if additional transit options would be feasible or desired. There was a mix of responses with respect to whether such service is needed or would be beneficial
- While some respondents indicated a desire to see improved accommodations for pedestrians and cyclist along roadways, others believe that trailways might better serve these individuals or that safety and traffic conditions would not be improved with these accommodations.

**Goal E: Build strong and vibrant neighborhoods.**

- The quality of existing housing stock and challenges of maintenance over time were concerns of many participants.
- Participants had questions and concerns about planning for downtown, including not understanding what the current downtown plan entails, how it is funded, or how it is used. As a related point, some participants do not think downtown revitalization has been fast or successful enough.
- The character and small town feel of neighborhoods (not just “sterile” subdivisions) was important to some respondents.

**Goal F: Continue transparent, responsive, and responsible leadership.**

- While some participants had questions about the Capital Improvement Plan and how it works, several expressed that it’s important to tie the recommendations in this plan to it.
- While providing medical care options in close proximity to Plainfield was indicated as something that was important to several participants, some questioned the regional market conditions for this.
- Preservation of agricultural land as residential development moves forward was supported by several respondents.

**Youth Engagement: Transportation Options to School**

- In an effort to get the youth of Plainfield involved and excited about the engagement process, an activity was held whereby local elementary schoolers were given an opportunity to comment on their current and preferred methods of transportation to school
- The activity engaged a group of third graders and a group of fifth graders, and collected over 400 responses between the two groups

- The results found that most students get to school by bus (55%) and driving with a parent (34%)
- The results also found that most students would prefer to get to school by driving with a parent (26%) or by bike (22%)

## **D. Demographic Participation**

### **Who we heard from**

- The second round of engagement has produced 130 unique comments by approximately 40 individuals.
- About 30% of the input collected is from the in-person workshop, and 70% is from the online activity portal.
- The majority of participants identified as White/Caucasian, and those with a bachelor's and master's/Ph.D. degrees were overrepresented. Most participants were 45 years or older, with the largest age bracket being 65+.
- Most participants were from districts 2 and 3.
- Most people heard about this opportunity through social media and emails.

## **E. Next Steps**

This summary memo will be shared on the project website and will be used to inform the final round of engagement, which will take place in June and July 2024. Input will also help shape the draft comprehensive plan document, which will be shared with the public for final review and comment. Participants who provided their contact information will be kept informed about these opportunities as the planning process moves into its final phase in summer 2024.