Traverse City Neighborhoods: What should be preserved, enhanced, or transformed?
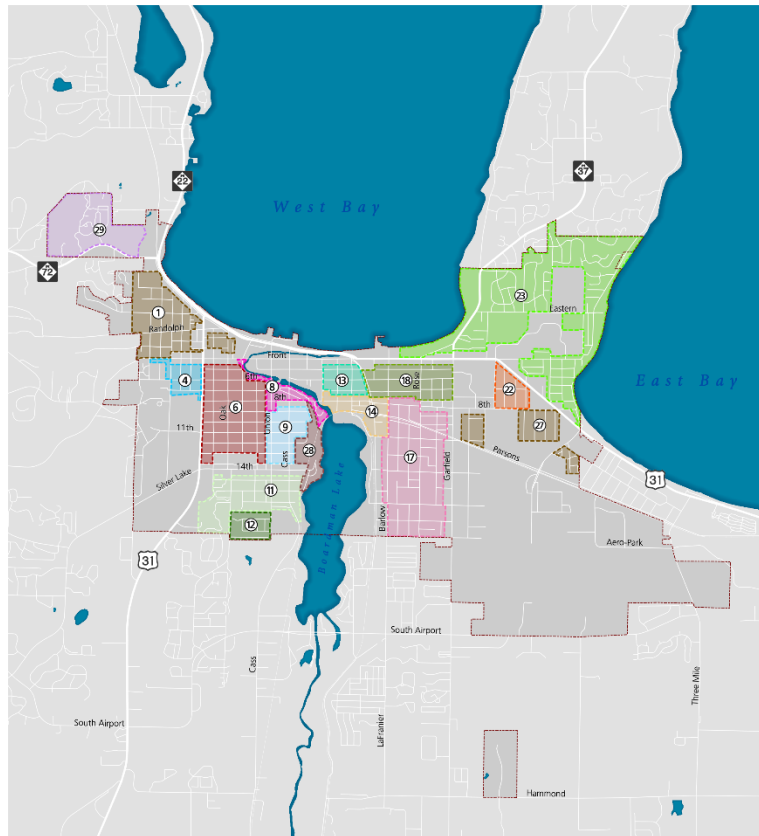
April 2023

Introduction

This document presents the responses to questions asked during Neighborhood Listening Sessions conducted this spring to inform the City of Traverse City Master Plan rewrite process.

The city conducted 9 listening sessions with every official and unofficial geographic neighborhood in the city, to understand what residents hope to preserve, enhance, or transform in their neighborhood. Neighborhoods were grouped geographically, as follows:

1. Morgan Farms neighborhood
2. Central neighborhood
3. SoFo, Fernwood, Top of the Hill* neighborhoods
4. Old Towne, Midtown, Lake Ridge neighborhoods
5. Slabtown, Kids Creek neighborhoods
6. Boardman, Oak Park neighborhoods
7. BOOM, Base of the Peninsula* neighborhoods
8. Oakwood, Triangle* neighborhoods
9. NoBo, Traverse Heights neighborhoods
Note: these neighborhoods do not have a formal association and are called this for organizational purposes for this activity only.

Pictured at right: Map of online survey respondents (survey only) by neighborhood.

Neighborhood Respondents

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, City of Traverse City

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

1: Slab Town Neighborhood: 12.5%
4: Kids Creek Neighborhood: 3.3%
6: Central Neighborhood: 12.7%
8: Midtown Neighborhood: 2.6%
9: Old Towne: 7.4%
11: SoFo/Fernwood Neighborhood: 3.3%
12: Hilltop Neighborhood: 0.4%
13: Boardman Neighborhood: 3.5%
14: North Boardman: 0.6%
17: Traverse Heights Neighborhood: 9.9%

18: Oak Park Neighborhood: 3.9%
22: Triangle Neighborhood: 1.5%
23: BOOM/Base of the Peninsula: 13.4%
27: Oakwood Neighborhoods: 4.6%
28: Lake Ridge/West Boardman Lake: 0.9%
29: Morgan Farms: 1.8%
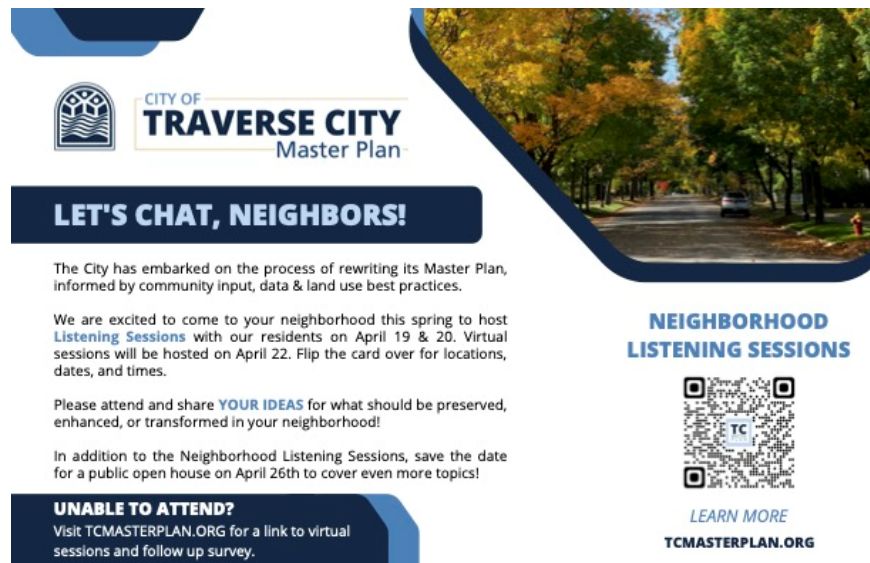"I live outside the city": 10.5%
"Other": 6.8%

These sessions were held in local coffee shops, churches, café's, schools, and meeting rooms that are in and/or near the neighborhood(s) participating in each session. The City felt it important to hold these sessions in locations rooted in the community fabric of each neighborhood.

In addition to the in-person/in-neighborhood listening sessions, the City held two virtual weekend sessions, open to all residents. The City also shared an online survey, with the same questions posed in the listening sessions, to provide a convenient option for people who were unable to participate in either the in-person or virtual session options provided.

In total, the city 702 people participated. 124 people participated in an in-person listening session, 34 people participated in the virtual listening sessions, and 544 people took the online survey.

This document summarizes participants' ideas regarding what should be preserved, enhanced, and transformed in Traverse City neighborhoods, as defined below:

- *Preserve:* What elements of your neighborhood do you hope remain the same as they are today, even if/as conditions change around them?
- *Enhance:* What elements of your neighborhood do you hope are improved in the future?
- *Transform:* What elements of your neighborhood do you hope are transformed in the future, meaning totally reimagined and/or rebuilt?

Pictured above: Postcard mailed to every city resident marketing the listening sessions (along with email, social media, and paid media advertising).

Overall Takeaways

This report summarizes the overall themes that emerged from the listening sessions and online survey regarding what should be preserved, enhanced, and transformed in Traverse City neighborhoods.

The appendices of this report (listed on page 5) include feedback organized by neighborhood from the listening sessions and survey. While some feedback varies by neighborhood, depending on the age, location, density, etc. of each neighborhood, common themes emerged for what neighborhood elements Traverse City residents are preserved, enhanced, or transformed, no matter where they live in the city. These are summarized below.

What would participants like to preserve in Traverse City neighborhoods overall?

- Trees and tree-lined streets.
- Walkability and bikeability.
- Historic buildings, homes, and streets.
- Quiet and peaceful neighborhoods.
- Parks and green spaces.

- Limiting short-term rentals like Airbnb.
- Neighborhood schools.
- Low housing density.
- Pedestrian-friendly lighting.
- Access to water and beaches.

Pictured above: listening session with SoFo, Fernwood, and Top of the Hill (not an official designation) neighborhoods at Grand Traverse Circuit (left) and listening session with Oakwood and Triangle (not an official designation) neighborhoods (right).

What would participants like to enhance in Traverse City neighborhoods overall?

- Availability of local businesses, such as grocery stores and specialty shops.
- Public art installations.
- Safe and convenient crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.
- More appealing bus stops with shelters and lighting.
- Upgraded park amenities, such as playground equipment and pickleball courts.
- More trees and plantings in the street lawn.

- More ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units) that are proportionate to the scale of homes.
- Better street lighting and maintenance of roads and curbs.
- Beautification of deteriorated properties and corridors.
- More homeless care and shelter options.
- More stop signs to control traffic flow.

Pictured above: listening session with Boardman and Oak Park neighborhoods at Raduno (left) and listening session with Morgan Farms neighborhood at Hickory Hills (right).

What would participants like to transform in Traverse City neighborhoods overall?

- Access to affordable housing, childcare, and schools.
- More sidewalks and pedestrian crossings.
- Traffic calming measures, such as narrowing streets and adding 4-way stops.
- Buried utility lines.
- Resurfacing and improving roads.
- Improved drainage and stormwater management.
- Improved neighbor relations with City of Traverse City.

Appendices

Appendices are found at the link below or on the project website.

Project website: www.tcmasterplan.org