



CITY OF MCHENRY VISION 2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY
PUBLISHED OCTOBER 18, 2023





INTRODUCTION



WHERE WE WERE

The project team was present at the following events to gather public input and talk about the Vision 2050 Plan.

AUGUST EVENTS

FARMERS MARKET

- 📅 Thursday, August 17th, 2023
- 🕒 4:00pm - 7:00pm
- 📍 Veteran's Memorial Park

CONCERT IN THE PARK

- 📅 Thursday, August 17th, 2023
- 🕒 7:00pm - 8:30pm
- 📍 Veteran's Memorial Park

DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS

- 📅 Friday, August 18th, 2023
- 🕒 9:30am - 11:30am
- 📍 (Multiple Locations)

BLUES, BREWS, & BBQ

- 📅 Friday, August 18th, 2023
- 🕒 4:30pm - 9:00pm
- 📍 Petersen Park

- 📅 Saturday, August 19th, 2023
- 🕒 3:30pm - 7:00pm
- 📍 Petersen Park

INTERCEPT SURVEYS

- 📅 Saturday, August 19th, 2023
- 🕒 9:00am - 11:30am
- 📍 Home Depot

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

MCHENRY HIGH SCHOOL - STUDENT SESSION

- 📅 Friday, September 8th, 2023
- 🕒 10:30am - 2:00pm
- 📍 McHenry High School

DOWNTOWN UNCORKED

- 📅 Saturday, September 9th, 2023
- 🕒 12:00pm - 4:00pm
- 📍 Veteran's Memorial Park

INTERCEPT SURVEYS

- 📅 Saturday, September 9th, 2023
- 🕒 4:00am - 6:30pm
- 📍 VFW Baseball Fields

McHenry's Vision 2050 Comprehensive and Downtown Plans will be developed through extensive community engagement. To ensure that as many voices as possible are heard, the project team will be engaging with the community at multiple touch points throughout the planning process. The team will be present at city celebrations, project specific meetings, targeted outreach events, and through digital/online engagements.

This document is a summary of feedback collected at the engagement events the project team attended in August and September 2023. The purpose of this summary is to provide a public record of valuable input shared by community members, local business owners, and visitors to McHenry. This information and the results of the upcoming survey will be used to develop community supported goals and strategies to guide development and investment throughout the city for the next 25 years.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROGRESS OF THE PLAN OR TO SHARE ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK, VISIT THE PROJECT WEBSITE AT THE FOLLOWING LINK:

[MCHENRY2050.COM](https://www.mchenry2050.com)

AUGUST 2023 EVENTS – WHAT WE HEARD

McHenry residents are happy with the way the city and downtown have been evolving and are excited to see new development occurring. Participants were particularly excited about the continued development of Miller Point and the riverwalk. Parking challenges and concerns about growing traffic were consistently brought up when discussing new residential and commercial development, particularly downtown. Common topics are below.

MOBILITY

Members of the community consistently remarked on citywide mobility challenges. At each engagement event folks mentioned dangerous street crossings, a general lack of sidewalks along busy streets, and limited ability to travel around without a car. There was a particular focus on the need for safe pedestrian crossings and bikeways. Multiple residents shared a desire for the ability to get around via golf cart.

Many residents mentioned their frequent travel to Crystal Lake for shopping and access to Metra service to Chicago. There were multiple instances where folks did not know McHenry had a Metra stop, and many others expressed a desire for more frequent service from McHenry to Chicago. When prompted, folks showed interest in the ability to use Metra service for travel between neighboring communities such as Crystal Lake.

VACANT LAND & REDEVELOPMENT

A lot of feedback was provided lamenting the loss of retailers along Il Rt. 31 such as Kmart, Walmart, and Target. Residents were concerned about the vacant storefronts and proliferation of self-storage facilities in former shopping areas. These areas were identified as opportunities for new mixed-use development, and there were multiple comments about making these more walkable and pedestrian friendly developments.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Residents and downtown business owners were generally happy with the continued development of Green Street and Riverside Drive as downtown destinations. The need for investment in Main Street from Il Rt. 31 to the Metra station was a common response and many folks think the area has great potential for shopping and entertainment in the Downtown area.





COMMON THEMES FROM CONVERSATIONS

- Better walking and biking infrastructure connecting downtown to outer neighborhoods is needed. Connections to and between Prairie Trail and the riverwalk could create a more robust off-street network.
- People are walking and biking in dangerous conditions and there is a concern about access to school bus stops, local businesses, and other destinations for folks without a car or the ability to drive.
- Access to alternative modes of transportation to relieve congestion and burden on parking, especially around major events and weekends. Ideas such as a downtown trolley or golf-cart circulator were mentioned.
- Shared/municipal parking should be included in new developments downtown to accommodate for increase in downtown visitors. This was mentioned multiple times during discussion of the property located between Elm Street, Green Street, and Boone Creek.
- Need to invest in areas on downtown periphery such as Main St and Riverside Dr. Downtown should be a cohesive district rather than isolated strips. Street festivals and summer activities could be more dispersed to bring attention and investment to different areas of downtown.
- Better upkeep and investment in public parks and open spaces. Opportunities to include local art and creative displays could draw attraction to underutilized parks.
- Year round programming should be considered. Opportunities should be explored to attract visitors in colder months with activities such as an ice skating rink or holiday village.
- A major theme was the need for housing that is attainable for seniors, singles, and young families.
- Opportunities for existing businesses to access funding for improvements would help improve more established and historic business corridors.
- Preservation of and investment in historic buildings.



We asked you to tell us where to invest!

Participants were given a bag of 10 coins and asked to think about where they'd focus investment if they were in charge.

- They could spread their investment any way they liked.
- They were allowed to give more than one coin if they considered investment in that topic a priority.
- They were told to not give any coins if investment in that topic was the least important to them.

WHERE WOULD YOU INVEST IN MCHENRY?



AUGUST ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY



Think about it....

If you were the mayor for a day, where would you focus investment?

Coin Results:

	Downtown Redevelopment	125 coins
	More Types of Housing	36 coins
	Economic Development	70 coins
	Walking & Biking Infrastructure	85 coins

SEPTEMBER 2023 EVENTS – WHAT WE HEARD

DOWNTOWN UNCORKED

On Saturday, September 9th, the project team set up a booth at Neumann Park on Green Street during the Downtown Uncorked event. Between noon and 4:00pm there were approximately 250 passersby who stopped at the booth and shared their thoughts and ideas for the future of McHenry. While many of those we conversed with were from McHenry, many were visiting from around the region and shared what draws them to Downtown McHenry. Some common themes from these conversations are below.

- o **Downtown McHenry is a charming and vibrant location that draw shoppers, diners, and entertainment seekers from many surrounding communities.**

Participants came from as far away as Kenosha, Wisconsin to attend Downtown Uncorked. Many folks were familiar with McHenry as a location they frequent and have enjoyed watching prosper over the past 5 years. Celebrations and special events are common draws for visitors and residents alike. Many have family here or find that it is a convenient spot to rendezvous with friends and family in surrounding communities.

- o **The growth of downtown and the riverwalk have been great developments.** Participants heaped praise on the evolution of downtown McHenry. The riverwalk, new shops and restaurants, and Miller Point were common points of pride and optimism. Multiple residents mentioned the need to connect McHenry’s “three downtowns” and the particular need for investment in Main Street. When discussing Main Street there was often surprise expressed at the difference between that area and Green/Riverside. Some participants did not even know there was Metra service, and many expressed their desire for more frequent and useful train service. Nearly every conversation about downtown growth led to concerns about parking and accessibility. Generally, people who lived in McHenry and nearby were open to a multi-modal approach that created better walking and biking connections to downtown to alleviate the need to travel by car.



Grab a Bag of 10 Coins
Think about where you'd focus investment if you were in charge.

- You can spread your investment any way you'd like.
- Give more than one coin if you consider investment in that topic a priority.
- Don't give any if you think it's the least important.

WHERE WOULD YOU INVEST IN MCHENRY?

SEPTEMBER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY



Think about it....
If you were the mayor for a day, where would you focus investment?

Coin Results:



Downtown Redevelopment **136 coins**



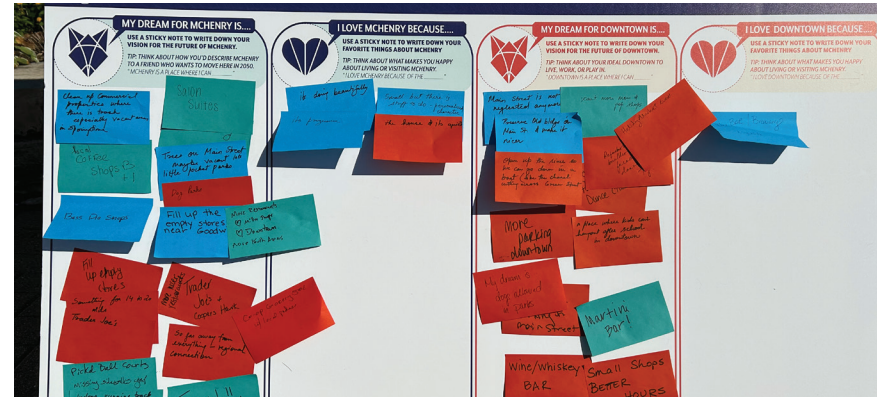
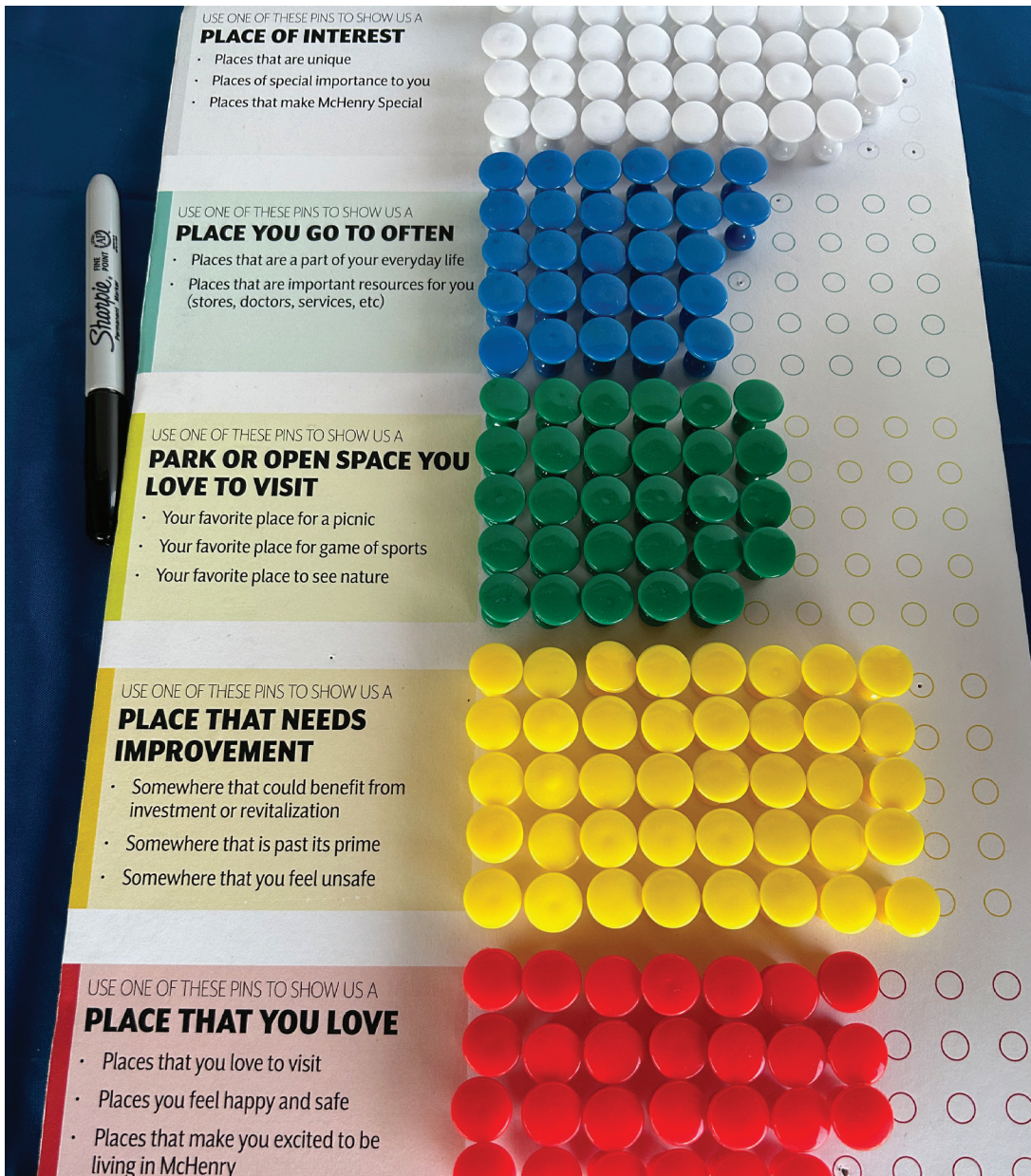
More Types of Housing **31 coins**



Economic Development **129 coins**



Walking & Biking Infrastructure **131 coins**





INTERACTIVE SESSION AT MCHENRY HIGH SCHOOL

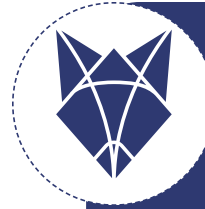
On Friday, September 8th, the project team presented to three high school government classes and collected feedback from students about their vision for McHenry. The team began with a brief lesson on city planning, the role of a city planner, and the purpose of a comprehensive plan. Students generally were unfamiliar with these concepts when first asked, and the lesson helped frame the conversation that followed. There were a few common themes across the three classes (about 75 students in total) that came up.

- **The need for roadway improvements.** Students remarked that biking around town and across many intersections feels unsafe. Crystal Lake Road is very congested before and after school and a headache to navigate by car, and it feels unsafe to cross on foot or bike.
- **A lack of age-appropriate activities, particularly downtown.** There was a general consensus that there is a lack of options for entertainment or hanging out around McHenry, and particularly downtown. The only nearby movie theatre, the McHenry Outdoor Theatre, is seasonal and most of the downtown options are bars and restaurants that cater to adults. There was also mention that most opportunities for sports are outdoors and there are few wintertime activities
- **McHenry doesn't have the food offerings neighboring towns and cities provide.** There was a lively conversation about the lack of major fast food chains such as Raising Canes and Chick-Fil-A. Students also talked about the lack of diversity in options for food in the downtown and a desire for a wider variety of food offerings.

When asked whether students wanted to stay in McHenry or return in the future after high school, there was neither a refusal nor excitement to return. Generally, McHenry was identified as a good place to live, but lacking major attractions that cater to a young population.

MAP EXERCISE

When asked to identify the locations of areas of interest on the map of McHenry and downtown, many students identified areas they disliked driving. While some reasons were from a desire to drive at higher speeds, most were areas they felt unsafe or experience dangerous or frustrating experiences. Besides Crystal Lake Road, there were multiple students who identified Elm Street (downtown) and the intersection of Veterans Parkway at IL-31 as key problem areas.



COMMON THEMES ALL CONVERSATIONS

- **A need for greater diversity of dining and entertainment downtown (cafes, ethnic food offerings, non-alcohol focused establishments)**
- **Entertainment options for kids and young adults (youth oriented events, pools, waterparks, indoor entertainment centers, movie theatres, etc.) under 21**
- **Indoor/climate controlled sports and recreation (walking/running tracks, swimming, pickleball, football, batting cages, weight lifting) facility**
- **Walking and biking infrastructure (connections between existing trails, connections downtown, places for seniors to walk)**
- **Continuing to host events and celebrations that attract visitors and community members**
- **Filling in vacant store fronts and building off the momentum for downtown development**
- **Supporting local businesses**
- **Investing in areas that haven't seen recent improvements, notably Main Street and the west side of town**

