



City of Northville: Master Plan Survey #1 Survey Results and Analysis Final Report

August 26, 2020

Survey Period: June 4 - August 10, 2020
Data download on August 10, 2020

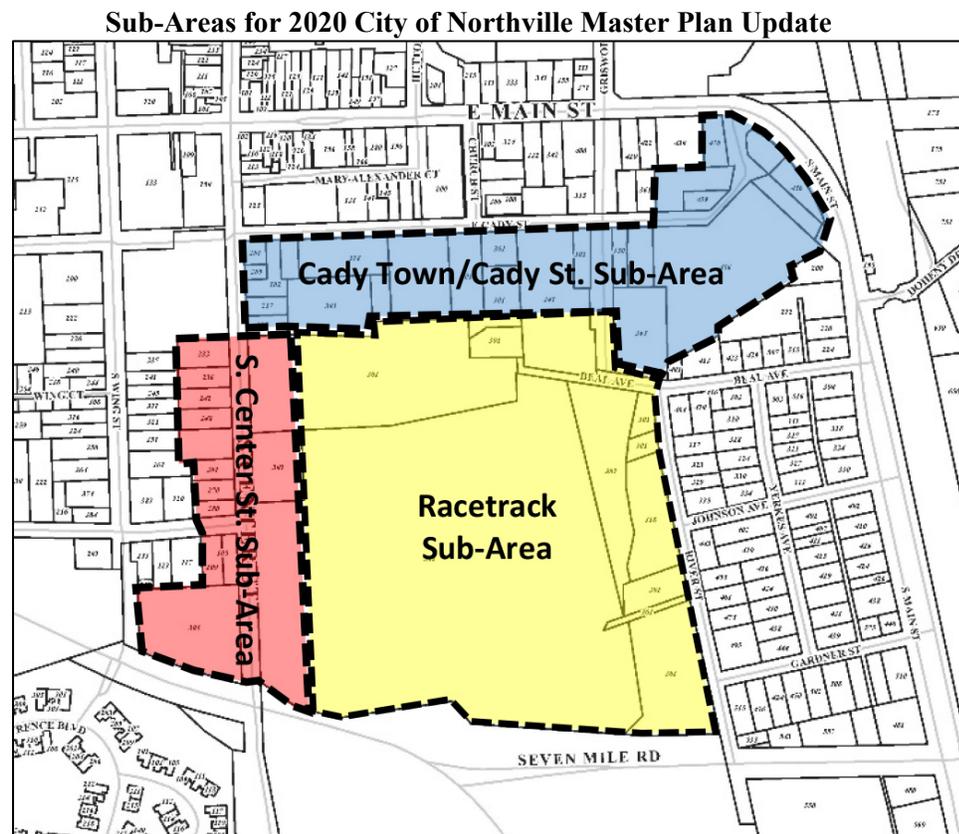
Assistance provided by Carlisle Wortman Associates

As part of the update to the City of Northville’s Master plan, the Planning Commission is implementing a four-part community engagement process:

1. Informational seminars
2. The survey covered in this report
3. A virtual open-house to be held in September 2020
4. A follow-up survey to be released to the community in October 2020

A Master Plan sets out a community’s vision for future development and addresses specific subareas of the City. The specific areas being considered in the current Master Plan review/revision process are shown in the map below:

- Cady Street (the south side only, from Center Street to S. Main St.), and
- the current Racetrack property, and
- the property on South Center Street between Cady and 7-Mile.



Survey Overall

The goals of this survey were to:

- Confirm key priorities for the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center Street sub-areas;
- Discern what is most valued about the character and vibrancy of Northville; and
- Identify potential opportunities, needs and concerns with the future of the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center Street sub-areas.

Statistics on the survey are:

- The survey was open via a weblink from June 4 to August 10, 2020.
- 1,000 individuals participated, including 20 respondents who partially completed the survey.
- 565 or 57% of the respondents were City of Northville residents. The second largest group of respondents were Northville Township residents, which made up 340 respondents accounting for 34% of the participants. City of Northville business owners (57) and those who work in the City Northville (82) were nearly 6% and just over 8% of the respondents, respectively. Those owning businesses (15) or working in Northville Township (22) were less than 4% of the respondents. Respondents were allowed to check multiple boxes, so there is some crossover between groups, accounting for over 1,000 respondents when the groups are totaled.
- Of the City residents participating, 96% had lived in their residence for over a year. The U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates approximates that 91% of the City's population lived in the same house the previous year. While the questions are not identical, the number of newer residents taking the survey could be a lower percentage of the sample than of the City's population overall.
- Over 95% of the City-resident respondents indicated ownership of their home. However, the U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates that only 77% of city residents own their home. The percentage of renters is less in the City-resident respondents (5%) than the U.S. Census estimates (21%). Renters in the City may have been underrepresented in the survey responses.
- U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates approximates that 19% of the City's population lives alone and is over 65 years old. The survey had 11.4% respondents indicating they were seniors living alone. This group may also be underrepresented in the survey responses.
- In terms of households with children, the Census estimates 25% of the City households have children, while this type of household represents 42.6% of the survey respondents. This distinction may be a result of both spouses from a household with children taking the survey. The increase may also be a result of targeted marketing to encourage this usually underrepresented group in the City of Northville to participate. In any case, this group is overrepresented in the survey results, compared to the total number of households with children in the City.
- A ballot box stuffing report showed that the same IP address was used by 4 or less respondents in seven instances, accounting for 22 responses overall. Since multiple family members or a multiple-family building, like Allen Terrace, may use the same IP address, those surveys were included in the analysis in this report, accounting for just over 2% of the total respondents.

The report includes a written analysis for each section of the survey with statistics from the multiple-choice questions and highlights from the open-ended questions. The raw data has been provided to the City of Northville and is available upon request or on the Master Plan page on the City's website. Each section includes charts or tables with data from the multiple-choice questions. The analysis is presented using the following guidelines:

- The data presented is from all respondents. A separate analysis was run for responses from City residents and business owners. However, the responses were not significantly different from the overall responses for almost all of the questions. When City resident and business owner responses differed by more than 5% from all respondents, it is noted in the narrative.
- Percentages are based on the responses to that individual question, not the overall sample unless noted otherwise. So, for example, if 88% report they agree, that means that 88% of the respondents answering that question agree. Note that all respondents did not answer all of the questions.
- Open ended responses are grouped by similarities, differences, and unique ideas. A verbatim report of the open-ended responses has been provided to the City and is available upon request, or on the Master Plan page on the City's website.

Survey Results

Perceived Community Priorities Analysis

To gauge whether the perceived community priorities for the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center Street sub-areas resonated with the community, respondents were asked if they agreed, disagreed or were neutral on the following statements in the table below. Of respondents answering this question, there was agreement for all the statements, indicating support for these priorities.

Survey Question #1: Impression of Priority Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The design of any new development should blend seamlessly with the surrounding areas.	88%	9%	3%
It's important to maintain/enhance walkability in these sub-areas.	97%	3%	0%
Streets and sidewalks should facilitate connections (such as between downtown, Hines Park and existing and future neighborhoods to one another).	94%	4%	1%
New development should include welcoming public spaces that can be used by all Northville residents.	90%	8%	1%

All respondents for question: N=992 for statements on design and walkability, N=991 for statement on connections, and N=987 for statement on welcoming places.

In the open ended responses, where respondents were asked to share additional comments about the items listed above or other priorities that may be missing from this list, the following themes, conflicts, and unique ideas emerged:

- **Density** was mentioned as a **concern** by many respondents, with suggestions for lower-density as a priority. Many felt that the sub-areas should be the same density as the existing City neighborhoods and not look like a subdivision.
- **Traffic** – volume, flow, and impact of any development on an already congested area - was also shared as a **concern** by many of the respondents, especially at the intersection of Seven Mile and Sheldon/S. Center. Some suggested additional traffic and parking studies were needed. Others questioned the need for a roundabout, and had concerns for pedestrian safety.
- **Blending seamlessly** was discussed further as a **priority** by several respondents, saying that recent developments had failed in this respect. However, some respondents questioned what this phrase really meant, whether it is a valuable metric, and if the new development could be an improvement upon the existing surroundings.
- **Walkability** was cited as an important **priority** by multiple respondents. Ideas shared on walkability included a pedestrian greenway connecting Downtown and Hines Drive, bike lanes and paths, enhanced bicycle lanes, and safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclist at Seven Mile and Sheldon/S. Center St.
- **Daylighting the river** was seen as a **priority** by many respondents. Suggestions included a greenway with a walking trail, boardwalk and/or foot bridges.
- Many respondents suggested **open space** is a **priority** for these sub-areas. Ideas for open space or parks included: a central gathering space for the City, a replica of Ford Field, a fountain art/splash area for children, a skate park, event space, animal-friendly park, a community center, keeping the farmers market, an amphitheater, and outdoor skating rink.

- Some respondents *suggested* that redevelopment of this area could help Northville become a *destination*, many citing Plymouth as an example of a downtown park surrounded by restaurants, shopping, and condominiums. Some respondents suggested that dining and shopping were priorities, with requests for a gourmet grocery store and boutique retail.
- *Differing opinions* were shared in terms of *housing* on the site. Some felt that housing was not appropriate in any form while others did not want apartments or multiple-family units, particularly high-rise buildings. A few expressed concern that the schools were already overextended as part of their comments related to housing. A number of other respondents expressed support for a range of housing including starter homes, affordable housing, single-family and multiple-family housing, townhouses and condominiums, ranches, or other types of senior-friendly housing. Many also shared that any new housing should be affordable to Northville residents, not “million-dollar” houses.
- Respondents had *different feelings* about *character and architectural style*. Some respondents wanted to maintain the character of the community, especially the Victorian theme. Many asked that modern-looking buildings be excluded. Suggestions were continuing the existing block pattern from Downtown, extending the historic district to this area, using the topography as an asset to create visual interest, and mandating architectural designs in the master plan like in Santa Barbara, California. However, a number of respondents expressed that a variety of building styles should be allowed and disagreed with a need for all buildings to be in a Victorian style.
- A few respondents asked that the *racetrack be preserved*.
- Suggestions for priorities other than those listed included yard size and lot size, friendly to nature, cohesiveness, passive energy, promoting neighborly interactions, outdoor lighting that reduces light pollution and light trespass into homes, and storm water management.
- Unique ideas shared included integration of remnants of the racetrack into the design, Church/Hutton should not be an access point to the new development, use parking structures, add significant number of trees with welcoming landscaping, provide a location for a new post office, plan for pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods but not necessarily vehicular connections, use the high quality building standards for the Downtown, require yards that are in scale with homes, add a food truck area, avoid grid-like street pattern, and move the City’s athletic fields to Northville Downs.

City of Northville Character and Vibrancy

A series of five questions were asked to discern what was most valued about the character and vibrancy of the City of Northville.

The first question asked respondents to choose characteristics of Northville that make it unique and special to them. The table on the next page shows the percentage breakdown for the 998 respondents. Some things to note are:

- For City residents and business owners, the percentage of respondents selecting “The ability to easily walk from place to place” was slightly higher (49%) than the overall group (43%).
- Safety was chosen by only 33% of the City residents and business owners responding, slightly less than the overall respondents (37%).
- When “other” was chosen, many respondents said the Northville Downs Racetrack should be preserved, while others mentioned Northville’s unique dining and shopping opportunities, the sense of community, the farmers market, and the diversity of housing in terms of appearance and differing neighborhood characteristics.

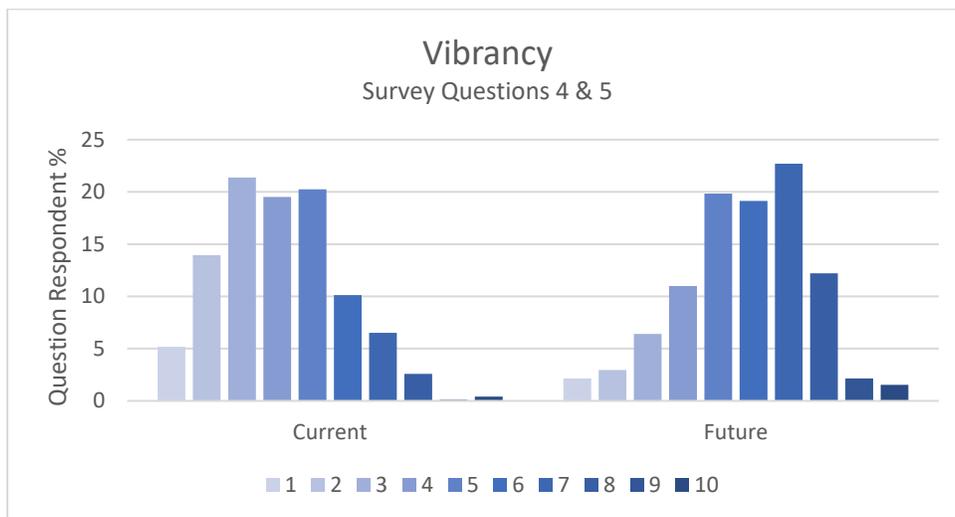
Survey Question #3: Unique and Special Characteristics of Northville	%
The “small town” feel	61%
Downtown’s atmosphere	54%
The ability to easily walk from place to place	43%
Great schools	41%
In-town shopping/dining opportunities	37%
Safety	37%
Historic, single-family homes	36%
Parks and green space	35%
Variety of family-friendly events and festivals (concerts, parades, art shows, etc.)	34%
Quiet residential streets	29%
Well-maintained streets and public spaces	23%
Sense of community among residents	20%
Strong/stable real estate market	14%
Prosperous community	8%
Diversity of housing types (single-family, townhouses, multi-family) within one town	6%
Access to expressways to connect to the larger metro Detroit area	5%
Other	3%

All respondents for question: N=998. Data shown as percentages of question respondents.

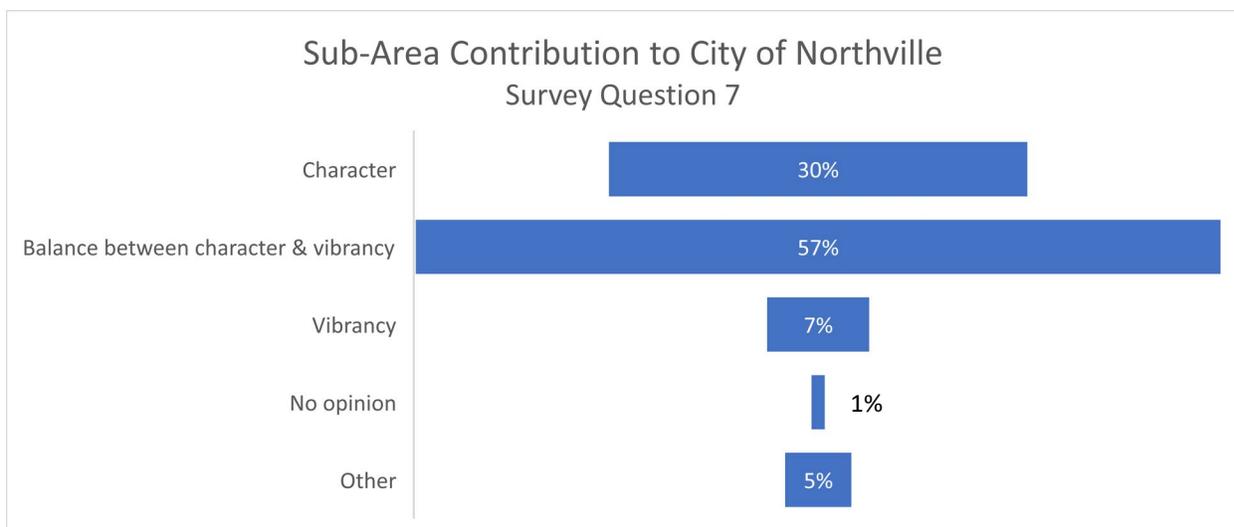
The next two questions asked about the respondents’ perception of the current vibrancy of Northville and their desire for the future vibrancy of the City. Both questions asked the respondents to rank the vibrancy on a 1-10 scale, with 1 suggesting that Northville is currently a cozy little community where the sidewalks roll up early every night and 10 suggesting Northville is currently a bustling municipality that’s jumping with energy and things to do 24/7. The next question (fourth out of five) was open-ended, asking for additional comments on vibrancy. The last question in the section asked, “When looking at Cady St./Racetrack/South Center Sub-Areas, what should new development contribute to the City?”, with choices of character, vibrancy, balance between the character and vibrancy, no opinion and other. Key points from analysis of the responses to these questions as a group are:

- The majority of respondents, including City residents and business owners, saw the **current vibrancy** of the City between **three to five** on the 1-10 scale.
- When asked about **future vibrancy**, the majority selected between **five to seven** on the same scale. While roughly the same percentage of **City residents and business owners** selected five to seven for future vibrancy, slightly **fewer selected “7”** (20.48%) as compared to overall respondents (22.69%).
- When asked to select an option or balance between character and vibrancy, the **majority** (56.78% of all respondents and 54.68% for City residents and business owners) selected **balance between the character and vibrancy** with **character as the second most selected** choice (~30% for all respondents and City residents and business owners).
- In the open-ended comments (question 6 and “other” responses in question 7), the following themes, differences, and unique ideas were shared:
 - Respondents **disagreed** about the level of **vibrancy**. Many felt that the vibrancy of the **City should not change** and were concerned about the **traffic, parking and other impacts** on the City and surrounding neighborhoods. Others felt that the **vibrancy needed to increase**, but usually only **slightly** while maintaining a **family-friendly atmosphere** with more **diversity of shopping and dining** with later hours.
 - Several respondents asked to **preserve the racetrack** or its **history** in the redevelopment.

- Many of the respondents requested *more green space* and/or *public spaces* as a way to *increase vibrancy*.
- Several respondents felt the *open streets in Downtown* had *increased the city's vibrancy* this summer.
- Unique ideas shared to contribute to vibrancy included live music, shopping, high density housing, more use of the small theater and open air performance spaces, the addition of a small 2-screen movie theater, bike lanes connecting city and parks, a sculpture garden, a small museum, an old fashioned candy or toy store, and controlling traffic to encourage a small downtown feel.



All respondents for question: N=968 for Current. N=983 for Future. Data shown as percentages of question respondents.



All respondents for question: N=995. Data shown as percentages of question respondents.

Opportunities and Concerns: Future of the Cady St./Racetrack/South Center Street Sub-Areas

Questions 8 through 12 of the survey were intended to identify potential opportunities, needs, and concerns regarding the future of the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center Street Sub-areas.

In terms of opportunities (questions 8-10), the following themes emerged:

- City residents and business owners had the same rankings as the respondent pool as a whole, with the exception of infrastructure opportunities.
- Daylighting the river, more public parks, and expanding the footprint of downtown were ranked the most appropriate land use opportunities. Choices dealing with housing were seen as the least appropriate.
- The most appropriate commercial/retail opportunities were more space for restaurants, retail/stores, and bars/brew pubs/entertainment venues. More space for offices, both small and large scale, were ranked as the least appropriate.
- For strengthening infrastructure, the most appropriate opportunities were environmental improvements. These ranged from daylighting the river, improving streetscapes with trees, street lighting and landscaping, and improved traffic control/flow. Increased enrollment for schools, expanded public parking, and a city gateway at the intersection of 7 Mile and South Center were seen as the least appropriate. City residents and business owners ranked the expanded parking options (8 vs. 9) lower than the overall respondents, and ranked the city gateway higher (7 vs. 10).

Survey Question #8: Most Appropriate Land Use Opportunities in Sub-Areas	Ranking
“Daylighting” of the river (i.e., opening up the underground segment of the Rouge River that currently runs under the Racetrack)	1
More public parks or open space	2
Expanding the footprint of the downtown (i.e., creating more commercial/retail/office space)	3
Enhance the features/location of the Farmers Market	4
More public event space	5
More housing options for seniors who would like to downsize but still “age in town”	6
More entry-level housing for singles and young families	7
More space for large, single-family homes/neighborhoods	8
More multi-family housing options (apartments, townhouses, etc.)	9

All respondents for question: N=983. Data shown as ranked responses.

Survey Question #9: Most Appropriate Commercial/Retail Opportunities in Sub-Areas	Ranking
More space for restaurants	1
More space for retail/stores	2
More space for bars/brew pubs/entertainment venues	3
Addition of a boutique hotel/inn in the downtown area	4
More space for small offices (single ownership like lawyers or accountants)	5
More space for larger-scale offices (that require multiple office suites for a larger staff)	6

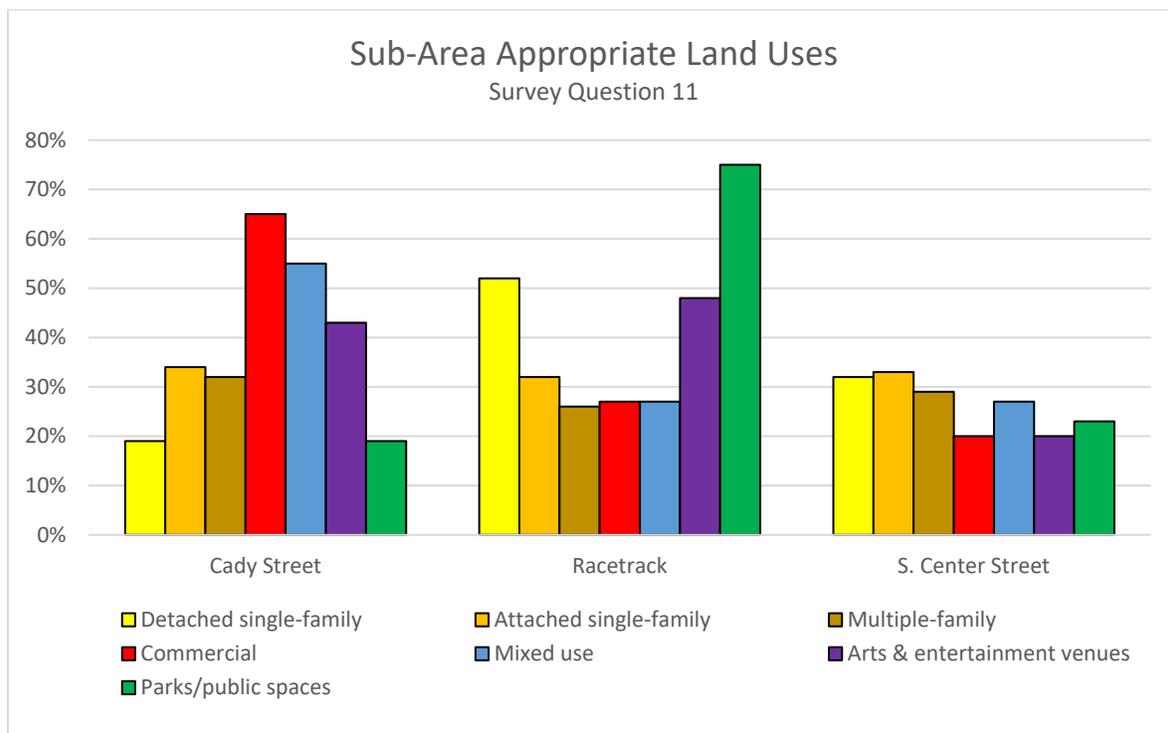
All respondents for question: N=969. Data shown as ranked responses.

Survey Question #10: Most Appropriate Infrastructure Opportunities in Sub-Areas	Ranking
Environmental improvements from daylighting of the river	1
Improved streetscape with trees, street lighting and landscaping	2
Improved traffic control/flow	3
Non-motorized transportation connections for bikes, scooters, and pedestrians	4
More residents to support the downtown businesses	5
Increased tax base to support improvements throughout the City (roads, public facilities, etc.)	6
Expanded public parking options	7
City gateway at the intersection of 7 Mile and S. Center	8
Increased enrollment for schools	9

All respondents for question: N=961. Data shown as ranked responses.

Survey question 11 asked, assuming the land use listed was a priority, where would each use be appropriate by sub-area. The following locations were identified for the land uses listed:

- Cady Street was seen as the most appropriate sub-area for commercial (retail/office/restaurants), mixed use buildings with commercial/retail/office on ground floor and residential or office on upper floors, and arts and entertainment venues. Attached single-family houses were seen as appropriate in this area by 19% of the overall respondents.
- The Racetrack sub-area was seen as most appropriate for parks/public spaces, detached single-family homes, and arts and entertainment venues. Attached single-family, multiple-family, commercial, and mixed use each were chosen as appropriate for this area by less than one-third of the respondents.
- No clear appropriate land use was chosen by the respondents for the South Center Street area, with percentages ranging from 20% for arts and entertainment venues to 33% for attached single-family residences.



All respondents for survey: N=1,000. Data shown as percentages of all respondents.

When asked to choose and rank the greatest concerns for the redevelopment or revitalization of the sub-areas from a list (questions 12-13), the themes below were of note:

- **Traffic** was the *greatest concern* with almost three-quarters of the respondents citing it as a concern and ranking it as the top concern.
- **Loss of small-town atmosphere, new development inconsistent with their desired character for Northville, and poor quality architecture** were the *next highest concerns* both in terms of percentage and rank. A *greater percentage of City residents and business owners* (41%) chose *poor quality architecture as a concern* compared to overall respondents (35%).
- Concerns expressed by the 5% of respondents choosing “other” included a roundabout at Center and Seven Mile, infrastructure impacts, loss of tax revenue from the racetrack, inappropriate density, flow between the different areas, and lack of affordable housing, particularly for seniors.

Survey Questions #12 & 13: Greatest Concerns for Sub-Areas	%	Ranking
Increased traffic (both city-wide and traffic impact on neighborhoods)	72%	1
Loss of small-town atmosphere	50%	2
Character of new development might be inconsistent with what I want for Northville	48%	3
Poor quality architecture	35%	4
Inadequate parking	28%	5
Diminished walkability/pedestrian safety	27%	6
Amenities like parks or the daylighted river may not be readily accessible to all Northville residents.	27%	7
Activity level/vibrancy of the new development might be inconsistent with what I want for Northville	23%	8
Loss of current farmers market location	22%	9
Negative impact on property values	19%	10
Negative impact on schools	17%	11
Increased pressure on water and sewer systems	13%	12
Increased housing prices/lack of affordability	11%	13
Increase in need for public safety services	10%	14
Increased stormwater runoff	8%	15
I don't have any concerns about the potential impact of redevelopment.	4%	16
Other	5%	

All respondents for question: N=980 for %. N=966 for ranking. For %, respondents could select multiple choices.

In survey question 14, respondents were asked to share any other thoughts about opportunities and concerns for the redevelopment/revitalization of the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center Street sub-areas.

Common themes or ideas, disagreements and unique ideas were:

- Many respondents shared that the redevelopment/revitalization of the future of the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center Street sub-areas was a *decision with long-ranging impacts* on the City with a *single opportunity* to get it right. With such high-stakes, respondents expressed concerns about who is making the decisions (preference for residents, not staff/consultants/architects/developers) and what rules and structures were needed, especially with the recent development project proposed in 2018/2019. Numerous participants felt that developers would not have the City’s best interest at heart since they have an economic motivation to maximize profit.

- A few respondents asked the *motivation behind planning for the redevelopment* of the sub-areas, asking if the Downs was selling the property or if the City was taking the initiative.
- Many respondents shared a *desire for redevelopment* to be *tastefully done* in a manner that fits with the *City's character*. Many mentioned oversized houses in the historic district and the recent development near Kroger as a lower standard of development that they hoped would not be repeated in the sub-areas. Models from other communities suggested were *Cherry Hill Village* in Canton, the park and surrounding area in *Plymouth* and *Dublin, Ohio*. Others suggested a land use pattern similar to those areas with a mix of park space, single-family homes, or townhouses with retail.
- Some expressed *concern* about *density*, many specifically requesting that multiple-family, townhouses, and/or rental housing not be allowed. Still other participants saw an *opportunity* for *affordable* and *senior housing* in the sub-areas.
- Other respondents asked that *nothing be built* on the sub-areas or the *entire area* be converted into a *park*. Others asked that the *racetrack be preserved*.
- Many respondents mentioned *traffic and parking as concerns*, with a few participants specifically asking for a *roundabout to not be allowed* at Seven Mile and Sheldon/S. Center St. A participant shared that decreasing speeding in neighborhoods is the primary concern for residents over optimizing the level of service for intersections
- Numerous respondents expressed *concern* that the *schools were overcrowded* and residential development in the sub-areas would further exacerbate the problem.
- A few respondents expressed *concern* about the *length of the process* for redeveloping the site and felt the area was *blighted*. Some from adjacent neighborhoods expressed frustration with the *unknown fate* of the sub-areas.
- Many participants saw *walkability, daylighting the river* and the *farmers market* as *opportunities*.
- A number of respondents saw *recreation* as an *opportunity* and suggested a *fitness center*, citing Livonia as an example.
- Some of the *organizing principles* suggested by respondents were: full discipline of 'Placemaking' with rich input and interactive synthesis; healthy balance of green space, retail and entertainment; sustainable approach which balances economics, the environment and equity; an atmosphere that will light up a young child's face, revitalize parents, and comfort our seniors; and environmentally-sound construction, infrastructure and utilities.
- Unique suggestions from respondents included: art opportunities for adults, new school, bike accessible bridges, a high-end grocery store and a senior living complex including a combination of multi-occupancy structures and stand-alone cottages. One respondent suggested that residents in adjacent neighborhoods be individually surveyed, and those responses given more weight in the analysis.

Conclusions

The redevelopment of the Cady Street/Racetrack/South Center St. sub-areas will impact the character of the City of Northville for generations, but it will also be a difficult decision. Whatever happens, not everyone in the community will be supportive of all aspects of a new plan. However, the themes in the survey responses provide some insights and next steps to garner consensus:

Need for Reflection of Current Community in Redevelopment

The requests to preserve Northville Downs, the differing opinions of housing types (no rental units to no “million dollar” homes), the suggestions on architectural styles and urban design point to a need for the redevelopment of the sub-areas to integrate and reflect the City of Northville’s identity and existing conditions. The challenge in the Master Plan will be to express those attributes, such as high-quality architecture, in a manner that can translate into an achievable and enforceable redevelopment project(s) that is truly “Northville”.

Concern about Strained Existing Systems

The road network and the schools were identified by respondents as systems operating at or over capacity, with concerns that redevelopment of the sub-areas could make bad situations worse. While strains on these systems will not halt redevelopment, mitigation can be required. However, some of the possible solutions, such as a roundabout at Seven Mile and Center/S. Center St., were seen unfavorably by some survey participants. As the Master Plan community engagement process continues, discussions about these systems, jurisdiction by other agencies, and available trade-offs and/or design options will need to be explored.

Recognition of Opportunities

The redevelopment of the sub-areas was also recognized by respondents as an opportunity for uses and places to enhance the City of Northville such as entertainment, dining, shopping, limited housing (single-family or housing for seniors), public spaces, cultural amenities, parks and natural areas. In the upcoming open house sessions and second survey, the conversation will continue on how opportunities can be included in redevelopment of the sub-areas, while enhancing the character of the City and lessening impacts to the extent possible.

A special thanks is extended to the 1,000 survey participants. Your time and voices were invaluable.