

# Big Ideas Summary Memo

## Results, Round 1 Engagement

October 21, 2024

This document summarizes the results of the first round of public engagement for Centerville Forward, a comprehensive plan for the City of Centerville, Ohio. The first round of engagement was branded as *Big Ideas* and was designed to capture big ideas from the Centerville community. Community members were invited to share their thoughts about the City through a combination of an in-person workshop, pop-up activities and an online survey. The ideas collected and analysis conducted thus far will be used to create specific comprehensive plan recommendations (policies, programs and projects) for Centerville.

This report summarizes the results of the Big Ideas in-person events and online engagement conducted from May to August 2024. Input was gathered in the following ways:

1. **Stakeholder interviews.** Six meetings with eight individuals with specific expertise on a topic (i.e., parks and recreation, housing, business, development, public service, arts, historic preservation, etc.), were interviewed. The planning team asked participants to provide background information on themselves, things that are or are not working well in City, 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 engagement.** To build momentum, promote the process, and reach a broad width of people, the planning team posted a survey on the project website, *CentervilleForward.com*. This survey asked questions surrounding three of the strategic plan's four broad goals: Service Delivery and Stewardship, Quality of Life, and Development. The 4th goal, Workforce, will be saved for the second round of engagement.
3. **In-person engagement.** An in-person workshop was held on June 18<sup>th</sup> at Sinclair Community College Centerville branch. After a brief presentation that provided the community with some background information on the planning process, the participants worked in groups to answer two critical questions, and complete two different mapping activities. Activity B1 focused on Change, Continuity and Connection throughout the entire City, and activity B2 focused on Preservation, Impact and Greenspace in Uptown.
4. **Pop-up events.** Participants were intercepted during a multitude of community events:
  - a. 6/14 Party in the Park
  - b. 6/26 Lifelong learning at the University of Dayton
  - c. 7/4 Americana, 7/12
  - d. Party in the Park

- e. 8/6 Mystery Night Out
- f. 8/9 Party in the Park
- g. 8/10 Boomerfest
- h. 8/25 Sunday Sundaes

The questions were identical to the in-person workshop but reformatted to accommodate the pop-up style format. City Staff and Steering Committee volunteers facilitated the events.

This memo includes the following components:

- A. Purpose
- B. Outreach and Publicity
- C. Findings
- D. Participation
- E. Next Steps

## A. Purpose

The City of Centerville launched *Centerville Forward*. A process to create a new comprehensive plan, expected to be completed by Spring of 2025. The last plan was completed in 2004. Since the last plan, Centerville has experienced significant change and new development. Now is the time to update the plan to reflect the changes the City is experiencing to 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 Centerville. Reaching geographic areas and demographic groups that are normally less likely to engage was a priority.

Overall, the purpose of the first round of engagement was to:

- **Inform** the public about the 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 January-February 2025 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-based communities, local businesses, local clubs, Centerville City Schools, etc. The Centerville Forward 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, business cards, etc.

- City's social media platforms.
- MailChimp (email blasts).
- Emails – stakeholders and organizations.
- Targeted outreach by Steering Committee members.

## C. Findings

This section summarizes the input collected from the stakeholder interviews, online engagement questions, and the Big Ideas Workshop.

### 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 is provided below.

#### Housing and Development

- Centerville has limited space for new development, with growth currently focused on higher-end apartments near I-675.
- There is a need for diverse housing options to attract working families.
- There is an interest in creating self-sustaining facilities and developing undeveloped land for public use.
- Centerville has a need for flexible zoning and development policies to support growth while simultaneously maintaining community character.

#### Economic Development

- I-675 is crucial for economic development due to its affluent population and significant retail presence.
- The City of Centerville aids small businesses and startups, directing them to helpful resources.
- Wright-Patterson Air Force Base favors tax-free areas.
- Manufacturing is a key sector in the region with over 2,500 companies in Dayton.
- Centerville faces challenges in finding commercially developable land.
- The City may need to undergo a rezoning process, with an ongoing focus on infrastructure and quality of life.
- The revitalization of Uptown is seen as a success.
- The east side of the City needs updates and is ripe for revitalization due to outdated buildings.
- Development of the Cornerstone shopping center is seen as a significant achievement.

#### Community Identity

- Summer concert series and fourth of July celebration is extremely popular, drawing many residents from neighboring communities.
- Public art is valued but could be expanded to enhance community identity.
- There are growing ethnic communities that need better representation in the City's events.
- There is a good effort by the City to preserve its history, though balancing historic preservation with progress is challenging.
- There has been a significant growth in concerts and festivals in the area; potential for more theater and local art showcases.

#### Transportation

- Centerville needs improved regional transit, especially bus services.
- Public transit expansion is seen as a key opportunity to enhance connectivity and draw more people into Centerville.

#### Outreach

- The City's outreach efforts, though extensive, often fail to reach the broader community.
- Many residents in Centerville are older, so social media is not the best way to reach them.
- It is suggested that the City is more proactive in their outreach initiatives.

#### Online Engagement

Online engagement was conducted on the Centerville Forward website. The Round 1 survey was conducted to give community members time to think about the questions and answer on their own time. The survey had 16 content questions and an exit questionnaire to identify which demographics were being engaged. The following is a summary of the key ideas shared through the survey. Please note that many responses noted places, strengths, and issues that fell outside of city limits. This memo only includes responses that relate to Centerville and fall within city limits.

Q1: Does the City of Centerville reflect your values in the services it currently provides? Why or why not?

- Most community members appreciate quality services from their police and fire departments, public schools, waste collection, and public works department.
- Centerville is overall praised for its clean, safe environment, parks and greenspaces, and family-oriented programming.
- The respondents value Centerville's respectful community, well-maintained neighborhoods, green spaces, and small businesses, which respondents note contribute to high quality of life.
- Many note that Centerville hosts engaging community events that are well received by the public.
- Respondents note the City balances support for small businesses with the needs of larger corporations.
- Most views on Uptown's development are divided; some enjoy enhancements, while others are concerned about high-end focus and commercialization.
- High property and income taxes are a concern for many respondents.
- Some respondents call for better property upkeep and code enforcement.
- Some community members desire more extensive sustainability efforts, including improved recycling and composting programs, and more expansive green infrastructure.
- Many opinions on housing are divided; some value new developments, understanding its addition to the community, while others worry about affordability and infrastructure strain – specifically around traffic.
- Many respondents note the sentiment that Centerville prioritizes attracting visitors over ensuring resident needs are met.

Q2: Where in Centerville do you walk/bike?

- Many respondents note they do not bike regularly in the City.
- Most respondents that ride bikes so do on neighborhood sidewalks, parks, and various trails throughout Centerville.

- Most respondents call for improved safety and better infrastructure for walking and biking throughout the entire community.
- Most respondents note that current automobile traffic and poor infrastructure make walking and biking challenging and unsafe.
- There's a strong demand for enhanced bike trails, safer separated biking routes, and better trail conditions.
- Many respondents face difficulties using biking and walking as viable transportation due to inadequate infrastructure and distance between amenities.

Q3: Where in Centerville would you like to walk/bike but are currently unable to?

- Spring Valley Pike
- Village South Park
- Clio Road
- Iron Horse Trail
- Cross Pointe
- To and from Bill Yeck Park
- Pleasant Hill
- Social Row Road
- Alex-Bell
- Bigger Road
- Uptown
- Across I-675
- State Route 48
- Sheehan Road
- To and from Weller Elementary
- Nutt Road
- Concept East
- Centerville Station Road
- Loop Road
- Yankee Trace neighborhoods
- Whipp Road
- To and from libraries
- To and from Activity Center Park
- To and from Centerville High School
- Feedwire Road
- Normandy Lane
- To and from Stingley Elementary School
- Far Hills Avenue
- Gateway Lofts

Q4: Where in Centerville do you have trouble finding a place to park?

- Many people noted they can find parking anywhere in the City.
- Out of the locations mentioned, Uptown was the most common.
- Forest Field Park
- Casey Jane Park
- Grant Park
- Beechwood Springs

Q5: Where in Centerville do you see many unused parking spaces?

- Kettering Health Centerville
- Strip malls
- Crosspointe Shopping Center
- Uptown
- Kroger
- Churches
- Office buildings

Q6: In what ways can the City of Centerville improve the quality of services provided to the community?

- Community members want to support local businesses and prefer affordable, practical dining options over upscale establishments.
- Overall, there is a desire to preserve the small-town charm of the City and avoid overly commercialized areas.
- Respondents want improved public engagement that is proactive in nature.
- There are calls to improve curb appeal of shopping centers/strip malls.
- Most respondents desire better pedestrian infrastructure, specifically in Uptown, including more benches, crosswalks and rest areas in parks.
- Some respondents advocate for better enforcement of property codes to maintain cleanliness and neighborhood character.
- Most respondents support expanding the amount of green space and adding family-oriented amenities throughout the City.
- Many respondents call for lower taxes to alleviate financial pressures on residents.
- Respondents want the City to focus on the regular clearing of sidewalks and improved road maintenance.
- There are some suggestions to maintain full police staffing and implement red-light cameras, enhancing traffic enforcement to improve safety.
- Respondents note they want to see improved waste management, and expanded recycling initiatives.
- Some share a desire for better communication about City successes and improved transparency in governance – specifically surrounding development.
- Some respondents are concerned about the impact of anti-tax sentiment, specifically surrounding funding of Centerville City Schools.
- Many call for improved road maintenance, better traffic flow solutions, and safer bike lanes.
- In Uptown, respondents want to preserve historic elements while ensuring adequate parking.
- Some respondents express a desire to preserve small-town values and limit further growth, fearing that overdevelopment may erode the City's charm.

Q7: What is your favorite place to visit in Centerville and why?

- Many note a diverse list of local restaurants
- Many note the extensive list of parks in Centerville
- Nature areas
- Libraries
- Community and recreational facilities

- Shopping centers - Uptown and Cornerstone
- Town Hall Theater
- Historical buildings and museums
- Schools
- Yankee Trace

Q8: Do you have a park located near your neighborhood? If so, do you use it? If not, what kind of space would you most like to see?

- Most respondents want better connected green spaces and trails
- More walking paths
- Dog parks
- Pickleball court improvements
- More trees and shaded areas
- Splash pads
- Community gardens
- Basketball courts
- More diverse and updated playground equipment
- A few mentions of outdoor learning.

Q9: Do you bike in Centerville? If so, where could connections be made to improve biking in the City? What improvements could be made to improve the biking experience in the City?

- Most community members are hesitant to bike due to heavily traffic roads, safety issues, and lack of dedicated and protected bike paths. Many prefer routes with separate and safer infrastructure.
- The Iron Horse Trail and routes around City parks are commonly used for exercise and daily activities but need better connectivity to one another.
- Some community members often drive their cars to find safer biking routes outside the City.
- There is specific mention of safety concerns near I-675, which impact biking safety.
- Despite being favored, areas like Uptown and Stubbs Park still present challenges due to narrow roads and heavy traffic.

Q10: What can Centerville do to better connect generations with one another?

- Many desire increased community engagement to foster intergenerational connections in Centerville.
- Many suggest making Centerville more attractive through vibrant small businesses, and increased youth-oriented activities, enhancing walkability, downtown connectivity, and accessibility for all ages, including the elderly, volunteer opportunities, increasing the number of communal spaces like cafés or activity centers.
- Some note increasing affordable housing options can make Centerville more accessible to younger community members and younger working-class families.
- Some note incentivizing restaurants that do not serve alcohol, that way teenagers can attend alone, and parents/grandparents can bring their children.

Q11: If you own your home, could you purchase it if it was on the market today?

- Most Centerville community members find it increasingly difficult to afford their homes or move due to significant rises in property values and interest rates.

- Many share that the sharp increase in property taxes and rising mortgage rates make it challenging for both current homeowners and potential buyers to buy a new home.
- Some homeowners mentioned that their homes have nearly doubled in value, making it impossible for them to afford a similar property today.

Q12: Do you identify with your neighborhood? If so, why?

- Many community members feel a strong connection to their neighborhoods due to long-term residence and shared experiences with their neighbors.
- Some neighborhoods are perceived as lacking a cohesive identity, especially where there is significant turnover or more diverse demographics.
- Overall, the sense of community varies, with some neighborhoods fostering a strong sense of belonging and others struggling with cohesion.
- Few mention living in senior or continuous care communities, valuing the peaceful and supportive environment.

Q13: What kind of places would you like to have in Uptown?

- Most respondents want to see casual and affordable restaurants
- Bakeries
- Child/family friendly attractions
- Coffee shops
- Bookshop
- Picnic area
- Greenspace
- Community garden
- Boutiques
- Fountain or water feature
- Outdoor seating
- Many want to see more crosswalks and connectivity
- Art galleries
- Gathering spaces
- Clothing stores
- Teen friendly options
- Community oriented spaces
- Locally owned businesses

Q14: If there was a new development in Centerville, would you like to see development that is similar to what the City has today, or would you like to see something different? If different, what would that be?

- There is a large concern that overdevelopment could lead to congestion, pollution, and loss of small-town charm. Instead, respondents want a balanced approach that respects the historic character of Centerville and improves existing infrastructure.
- Many community members call for improved bike lanes and better traffic management to reduce congestion and increase walkability.
- Some suggestions include extending left turn lanes and creating more pedestrian-friendly areas.
- Many respondents recommend utilizing existing vacant retail spaces before pursuing new developments. They mention when redeveloping these spaces, there should be a focus on pedestrian-friendly spaces.

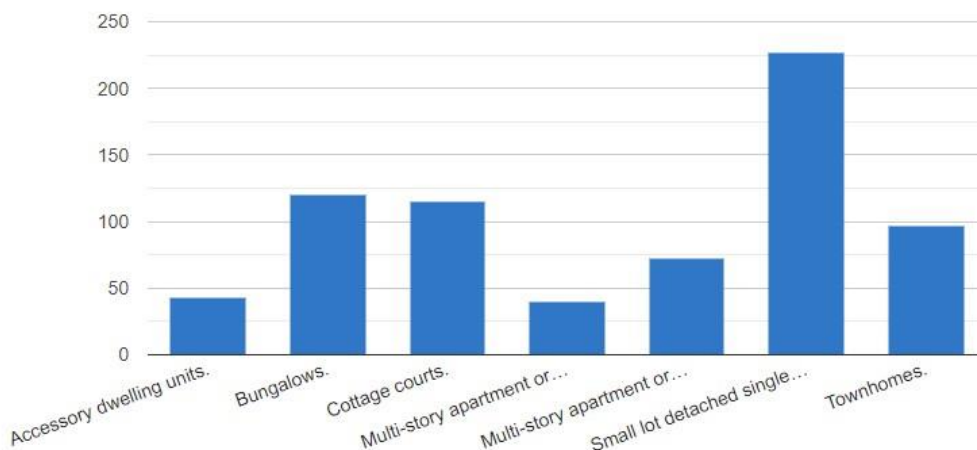


- Most responses focused on preserving historic buildings and making intersections more pedestrian-friendly, specifically in Uptown.
- Some respondents call for affordable housing options and smaller, well-designed homes that match the existing neighborhood character.
- Some respondents call for maintaining a suburban feel through single-family homes while avoiding high-rises.
- Some respondents want more senior living communities and unique residential options.
- Many push to expand and protect existing green spaces, parks, and community gardens, including expanding upon amenities like benches and bike paths.
- There are some concerns about urban heat and pollution, respondents want eco-friendly development while preserving natural areas.
- Many hold a preference for local small businesses, boutiques, and unique dining options, while simultaneously avoiding things like gas stations and fast food (auto-oriented developments).
- There is an interest in developing cultural and recreational spaces, like performing arts centers and community theaters.

Q15: In order to address current housing demands, more options may be needed within Centerville. Which options below would you find desirable to be constructed in your community (you may select more than one)?

Below are the results ranked from most desired to least desired.

1. Small lot detached single-family
2. Bungalows
3. Cottage courts
4. Townhomes
5. Multi-story apartment or condominium buildings with first floor commercial space
6. Accessory dwelling units
7. Multi-story apartment or condominium buildings



Q16: Are there housing types not listed above that you would like to see?

- Some respondents noted that they would not like to see any new housing developments anywhere in the city.
- Some noted that whatever is built must be affordable for working class families.

- Few noted that seniors or young couples without children need smaller units.
- Respondents mention that many within those demographics are currently priced out of the current housing stock within the city.

### **In Person Workshop and Pop Up Events**

An in-person workshop was held on June 18<sup>th</sup> at Sinclair Community College Centerville. After a brief presentation that provided the community with some background information on the planning process, the participants worked in groups to answer 2 critical questions, and complete 2 different mapping activities Mapping activity B1 and activity B2. Centerville Forward also had stations at different community events throughout the summer. Participants were intercepted during different community events listed below.

- 6/14 Party in the Park
- 6/26 Lifelong learning at the University of Dayton
- 7/4 Americana
- 7/12 Party in the Park
- 8/6 Mystery Night Out
- 8/9 Party in the Park
- 8/10 Boomerfest
- 8/25 Sunday Sundaes

The questions were identical to the in-person workshop but reformatted to accommodate the pop-up style format. City Staff and Steering Committee volunteers facilitated the events.

The first critical question asked was, “What kind of places would you like to see in Uptown?”. The responses were similar to the online engagement with respondents wanting more green space, gathering space, and affordable, locally owned businesses. Some more specific responses are listed below:

- Improved traffic flow - move through traffic out of Uptown
- Collaboration with the township to improve greenspace in front of the Town Hall Theater
- Cafe
- Art gallery
- Wine store
- Cultural arts and more public art
- Entertainment
- Restaurants
- Book store
- Quick, budget friendly restaurants
- Flowers, parks, swings, and chairs – where you don't have to see cars
- More bike racks
- More cross walks - sidewalk connectivity from surrounding residential areas
- Water feature

- Child friendly venues
- Plant shop
- Gift shop
- Coffee Shop
- Places to go after dinner
- Parking garage
- Protected bike lanes
- Brewery
- Dog park
- Thrift shop
- Indoor/outdoor gym
- Mix of new housing
- Sculptures
- Public art

The second critical question asked was, "Where is your favorite place to visit in Centerville and why?". The responses were also similar to the online engagement with respondents enjoying greenspace, dining and a multitude of businesses throughout Centerville.

- Parks and greenspaces
- Historic museums
- Local restaurants
- Uptown and Cornerstone
- Yankee Street Market
- Tennessee tomatoes
- Benham's Grove
- Townhall theatre

The mapping activities were designed to gain further insight into specific places where the community would like to see the key topics addressed. Participants will be asked to identify locations in response to the questions and describe their thoughts related to these topics

Activity B1 focused on Change, Continuity and Connection. Attendees were asked to reflect on their own map and then place sticker dots on their small groups shared map identifying areas they wanted to see things in Centerville change, continue and have connection improvements. After, the groups identified clusters of dots, name that area and then identify why they placed their dots in that geographic location. Following is a summary of responses.

#### Change

- Improve traffic flow in Uptown, extend the left turn lane, add bike infrastructure.
- Add a public bathroom and a water feature with greenspace in Uptown.
- Finish the shared parking lots behind businesses.
- Improve the landscaping and decrease the size of the parking lot around Crosspointe.
- Add sidewalks and pedestrian amenities on Alex-Bell.
- Compark's public realm does not feel like Centerville. Incentivize foot traffic in this space.

- Respondents note Compark is ripe for revitalization.

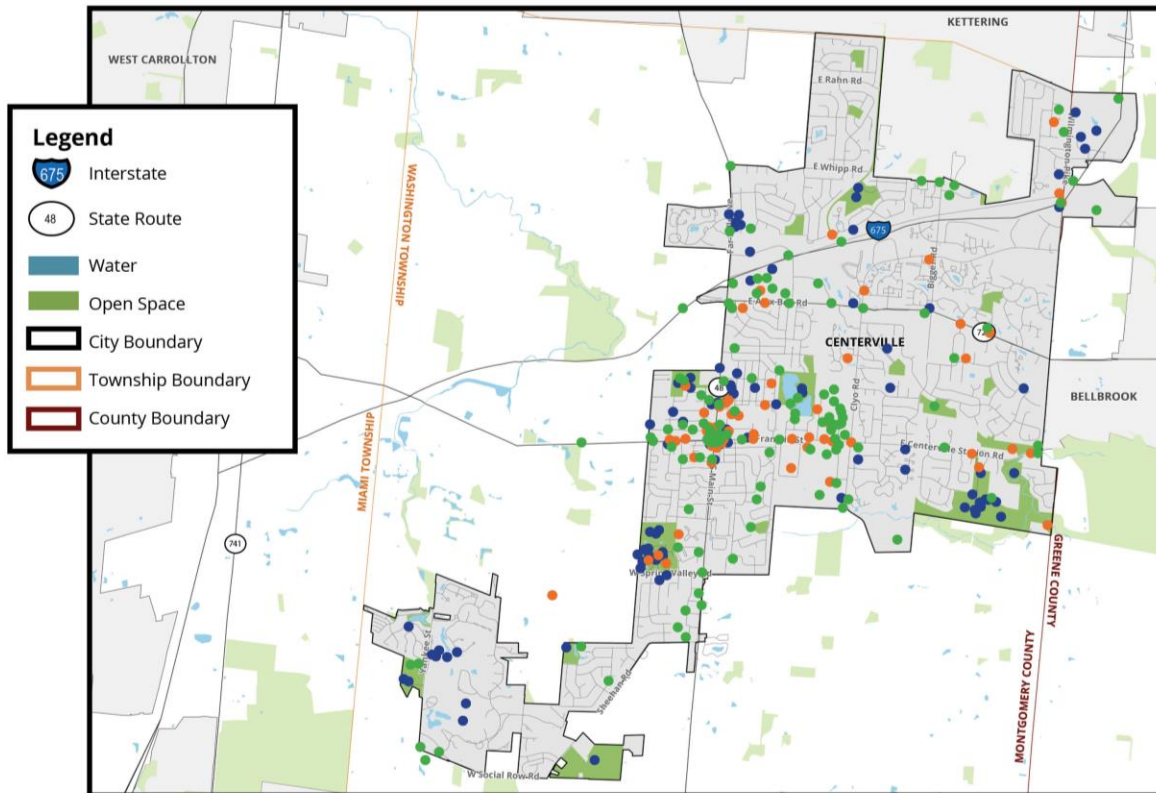
#### Continuity

- Most respondents note Bill Yeck Park is their favorite place to visit in the City.
- Stubbs Park
- Forest Field Park
- Library
- Benham's Grove Improvements
- Many share that social areas are great
- Trails
- Yankee Trace

#### Connectivity

- Add designated bike connectivity into Uptown
- Many want to see more crosswalks near and around Main and Franklin.
- DORA is a concern in relation to walkability because the current sidewalks are narrow and there is heavy auto traffic.
- Connect Virginia through to take traffic off 48.
- Create an alternative to Franklin traffic for the high school. Encourage kids not to walk to school (expand bike/pedestrian infrastructure) so there is not so much traffic at peak hours.
- Add a sidewalk at Bigger and Wilmington.

Following is the map from activity B1. The green dots represent areas where respondents want to see change. The blue dots represent the areas where respondents do not want to see change. The orange dots represent the areas where respondents wanted to see better connectivity.



Activity B2 focused on Preservation, Impact and Greenspace in Uptown. Attendees were asked to reflect on their own personal map and then place sticker dots on their small groups shared map. The dots identifying areas they wanted to see areas in Uptown be preserved, areas they perceive had a negative impact on the neighborhood, and areas they would like to see new or improved greenspace or gathering space. After, the groups identified clusters of dots, named that area and then identified why they placed their dots in that geographic location. Following is a summary of responses.

**Preservation**

- Historic buildings
- Character
- Existing parks
- Townhall
- Library
- Benham's Grove
- All original limestone settlements
- Archer House
- Nutt House

**Negative Impact**

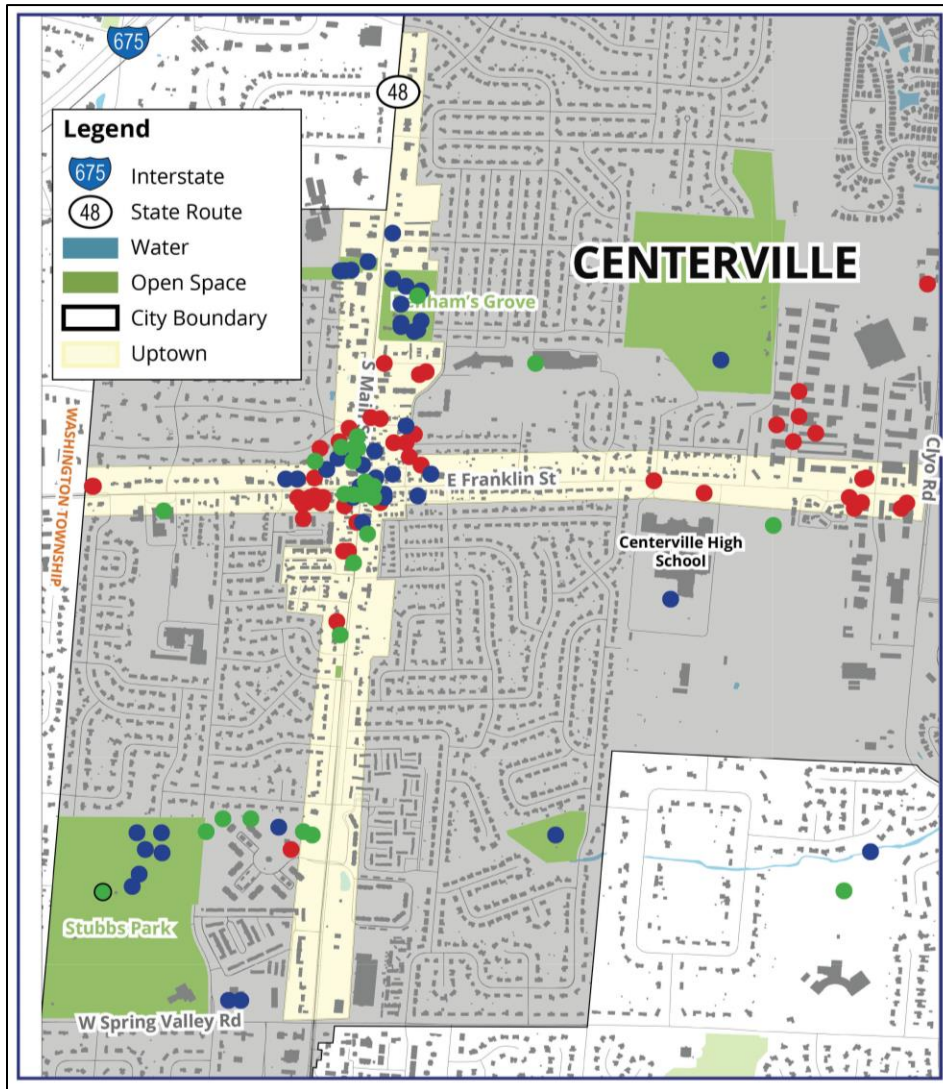
- Parlos
- Auto shops
- Dentist Offices – offices do not promote the entertainment district
- Roadside parking lots – move them to the rear of the buildings
- Compark
- Improve walking and traffic flow around the high school

- Centerville carryout
- McDiggers
- Vacant buildings
- Nellys Sidewalks and access
- Crosspoint church
- Nutt House vacancy
- Ridgeway connectivity

Greenspace or gathering space

- More greenspace overall
- Develop pedestrian access
- Promote gathering 'nooks'
- Dentist office on the corner of 48/Franklin could be used as a gathering space or greenspace
- The lot next to Townhall could be used as a greenspace
- Lot by the theatre could be used as a greenspace
- Create an Ampitheater in Uptown
- Create pocket parks
- Increase connectivity to Stubbs Park from Uptown

Following is the map from activity B2. The blue dots represent areas in Uptown where respondents would like the building/lot to be preserved or rehabilitated. The red dots identify areas respondents believe negatively impact Uptown. The green dots represent locations where respondents want to see greenspace or gathering space.



## D. Participation

### Activity Satisfaction

People indicated they appreciated the opportunity to provide input and left positive reviews on the activities and facilitation. One respondent wrote, “Thank you for providing this convenient way to provide input.”, another wrote, “Thank you for offering the citizens the opportunity to express their feelings”.

### Who we heard from

Round 1 produced 453 total exit questionnaires through the different avenues of participation. However, not all respondents filled out an exit questionnaire, therefore this summary only includes voluntary data.

The planning team heard from the greatest number of people through the online survey hosted on the project website. There were 421 online survey responses. There were about 50 people at the in-person workshop and about 35 responses collected throughout the pop-up events. Overall, the planning team heard from over 500 respondents.

62% of respondents responded that they lived within City limits. 33% identified they lived within Washington Township. It is reasonable to assume these numbers may not be accurate, based on the fact that in other parts of the survey some respondents had trouble distinguishing between locations inside and outside the City limits. While having a majority of respondents within the City is desired, some responses from outside the city are valuable to understand how Centerville is perceived more broadly.

Individuals under 19 were underrepresented, while those between 35-64 were overrepresented. The proportion of individuals who are 65+ roughly aligned with the proportion of the city that falls within that age cohort. Individuals with a graduate degree were also overrepresented. In subsequent engagement, it will be valuable to target the underrepresented groups.

## **E. Next Steps**

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