

Midtown-St. Albans: Visioning Process Summary

The visioning process, which took place in May-June 2018, marked the official start of the plan process. The visioning events aimed to create a rich base of community-sourced knowledge about issues and opportunities in the area. That information was used to focus the planning effort that follows. Specifically, it is assisting in identifying where data gathering and analysis resources should be focused, both in terms of specific places and broader issues. Finally, it represented a way for residents, business owners, institutions, and others to share with each other and the City project team their hopes for the future of the area. The visioning events included significant promotional efforts, including the mailing of more than 5,000 postcards with information about the plan.

Visioning Event Process

Visioning meetings were held at three locations within the study area. The intent was to rotate venues throughout to engage feedback from a diverse set of stakeholders. “Pop-up” events were held on two different Saturday mornings, with a more traditional Thursday evening meeting between. The Thursday evening meeting began with a presentation followed by facilitated small group discussions. Attendance for each event ranged from 35 to 60 attendees with a total attendance of over 100 participants. More than 300 respondents provided input through the survey, substantially adding to the responses gathered during the in-person events.

While the in-person events varied in format, they all included similar questions and exercises. They included issue prioritization and mapping exercises, where participants used red and green dots on maps to highlight issues and locations needing study. They also included an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback about the area’s future.

Top Issues

Generally speaking, transportation-related issues emerged as a primary theme. Many residents expressed concern about the current and future impact of traffic on local streets. Many also mentioned a need to make the area safer and more comfortable for people walking or riding a bicycle. Similarly, a desire to see transit improvements emerged as another common theme.

Housing emerged as another significant issue, with many participants expressing concern about future housing affordability and hoping for a diversity of housing types in the area. Some respondents cited teardowns of older houses as an issue.

Visions for the Future

Perhaps the strongest themes appeared in attendees’ visions for the study area. Many attendees hope the Midtown area will be less car-oriented in the future, whether through increased walkability or increased multi-modal options. A significant number of participants hoped the area will grow in diversity but maintain a strong sense of community and sense of safety. Many also hoped the area will be home to beautiful streets and neighborhoods and will retain ample trees and greenery. An inclusive and affordable Midtown was another theme. Lastly, there was a theme of a Midtown area that is prepared for future storms and stormwater challenges.