



INDIANA STATE PRISON RE-IMAGINATION PUBLIC MEETING ROUND-UP



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND DOCUMENT CONTENTS



“BURN RUBBER”: EMPHASIS ON ADVANCING PAST THE PRISON CLOSURE

With 120 attendees and a draw across several counties, the first public engagement event of the Indiana State Prison Re-imagination Project kicked off with excitement. Attendees felt eager to get started, and many wanted to see more progress, ready for the vetting of design ideas to start. We heard several people say to “go all in”, “be bold”, “burn rubber” on our design suggestions. Attendees felt like this was a great opportunity that shouldn’t be wasted.

THIS WAS HERE: ARCHIVING, BUT NOT DWELLING ON THE PAST

Many people remarked on the logistics of keeping some aspects of the prison (the graveyard was mentioned extensively), but without impairing the future. We heard questions about what would happen to things like “Old Sparky”, the barracks, the Chapel, and other relics of the prison. While we don’t know the answer to these, we felt that the general sentiment for change, but not destruction, came through loud and clear.

FOR MICHIGAN CITY, NOT SOMEWHERE ELSE: LOCAL AND INTENTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Whether we were discussing transportation or economic development, Michigan City residents wanted to see a plan for them. They were less concerned about a regional transit connection, for example, and wanted to see more walkable and bikeable areas for everyday use. On the economic development front, a plan with a longer timetable but with more opportunities for community input and local wealth generation was preferred. Related to amenities, some mentioned moments to increase tourism (like a Lodge!), but just as many people mentioned something with daily impact, like a grocery store.

NEED FOR MORE INFORMATION

Attendees asked for more information—details that the design team is still gathering and will provide when most of the pieces are in alignment. However, the consensus was for more of this: the public process, transparency in design, updates to community groups, and engagement from Michigan City and EDCMC staff. We received only one slightly negative comment concerning the project itself. All other feedback was positive and leaned into the questions the design team asked.

METRICS AND ENCLOSED DATA

Of the 120 attendees, we received 65 official survey results. It is likely many folks took the survey with a friend or spouse standing together. The results of all responses at all tables are summarized within.

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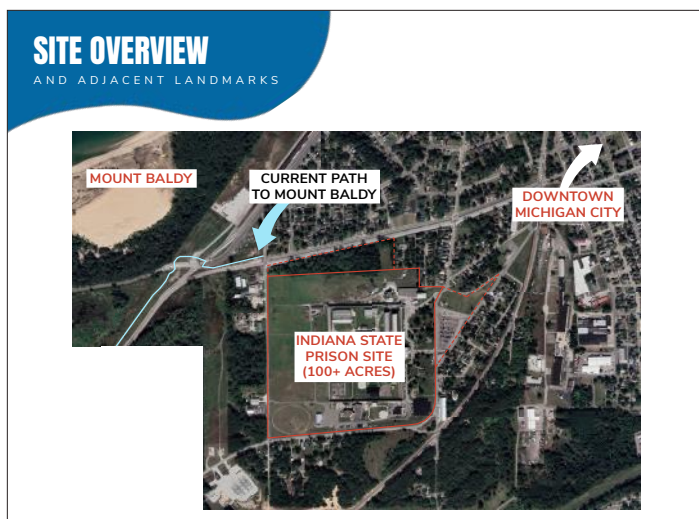


PUSHING THE FIRST BOULDER, TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION



Public audience during the introduction speeches



Site overview displayed at the public meeting to inform participants

WE HEARD YOU LOUD AND CLEAR, MICHIGAN CITY!

On January 22, 2025, 120 residents, public officials, and nearby neighbors to Michigan City filled the H.O.P.E. Center eager to learn more about the Indiana State Prison Re-Imagination project and participate in the initial ideation phase. The meeting began with an introduction from Mayor Angie Nelson Deutch, Clarence Hulse, Erin Meisner, and Douglas Farr. The public was instructed to engage with themed tables, including community, connectivity, economic development, design, and land-use, and requested to record any direct questions, comments, or concerns on note cards located throughout the engagement space. The 70-minute session provided a robust response from all participants through image preference surveys, quick design charrettes, multiple-choice surveys, and direct discussion with members of the City of Michigan City, Economic Development Corporation Michigan City (EDCMC), Farr Associates, and McKenna. The design team will now process the feedback obtained from the public meeting to begin drafting the initial report of the Indiana State Prison Re-Imagination project.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document divides each of the five interactive public engagement tables during the meeting. Each section introduces the initial question followed by an analysis of the results.



Participants vote on transit options at the Connectivity Table



Mayor Angie Nelson Deutch laying out her vision at the Design Table



EDCMC Executive Director Clarence Hulse interviewing with a local news channel



Project timeline displayed at the public meeting

CHOOSING FEASIBLE TRANSIT OPPORTUNITIES

CONNECTIVITY TABLE



Community members pondering and voting feasible transit options at the Connectivity Table



Participants reviewing feasible transit options for Michigan City at the Connectivity Table

WHAT WE ASKED

Nine images were placed in front of community members and participants:

- Bike lanes
- Boardwalk to the beach
- Dedicated bike lanes
- Improved pedestrian access
- Point-to-point transportation
- Amtrak service
- Integrated trails
- Tree-lined streets
- Walkable community

Participants were given three stickers and asked to select their top three preferences. This activity drove discussion permitting each participant to select three of nine options that they believe to be most important and feasible for the future of Michigan City.

WHAT WE HEARD

MOST FAVORABLE TRANSIT OPTIONS

Of the strongest choices selected, by far the number one response was walkable community with 51 votes. Second to that was the boardwalk to the beach, which ranked high at 30 votes. The integrated trail network and improved pedestrian access at 27 votes each also supported pedestrian accessibility to the site. The high-ranking of all the options that included pedestrian connectivity issues and walkable design reflects that an overall design objective for this site must be to accommodate human scale design and a pedestrian-first mode hierarchy. Whether a neighborhood context, civic context, shopping context, or recreational context, participants validated that walking and the experience of someone on the street, or on a trail, is the highest priority for site connectivity

THE MIDDLE GROUND

In the middle range was point-to-point transit, which received 22 votes. In fact, the most common question asked by participants was “what is point-to-point transit?” When facilitators explained that point-to-point transit is a service that would provide on demand pick-up and drop-off to select locations, like micro-transit, micro-mobility, and dial-a-ride services, participants reacted positively. Even when considering that there was less understanding of this option, it ranked relatively high, underscoring importance of transit within Michigan City and the significance of the opportunity to connect to this site from other transit services.

Bike lanes received only 19 votes and tree-lined streets received 12 votes. To some extent, the middle ranking of these options reflects that they are somewhat included in the above pedestrian connectivity choices. From a biking perspective, participants validated that the site is best connected through trails and mixed-traffic on-street biking options. Due to traffic volumes and speeds around the site, biking with traffic is relatively safe in Michigan City neighborhoods. Further, tree-lined streets may be more of an anticipated or expected amenity in the context of northwest Indiana, so we do not interpret its low-ranking as being a rejection of street trees for site design.

LEAST FAVORABLE TRANSIT OPTIONS

The lowest votes received were for dedicated bus lanes and Amtrak service, which received three votes and eight votes, respectively. Of those participants that remembered the time when the Amtrak station was closed, there was broad skepticism that a station would ever be reopened. Dedicated bus lanes, while an interesting feature for bus transit systems, have little practical application to connect to this site.

In all, participants showed a sophisticated understanding of the complexity of urban transportation systems and the need to integrate human-scaled design values into all aspects of the system development. A pedestrian-first mode hierarchy can be combined with appropriate biking, transit, and vehicle connections in a manner that yields an attractive and accessible re-imagining of the Indiana State Prison site.



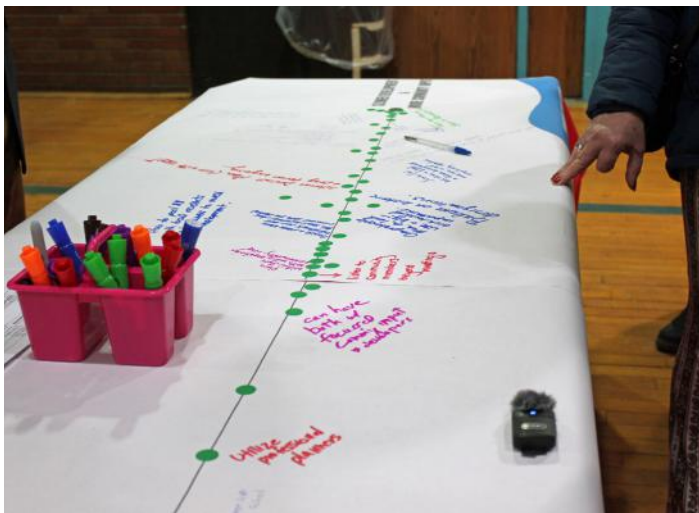
Image Preference Survey poster from the public meeting indicating number of dots placed per image

MICHIGAN CITY'S VOICE AND TIMELINE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TABLE



Participants writing personal development timeline preferences at the Economic Development Table to further express reasoning for selection



Dots and comments on the poster indicating timeline preferences of the project

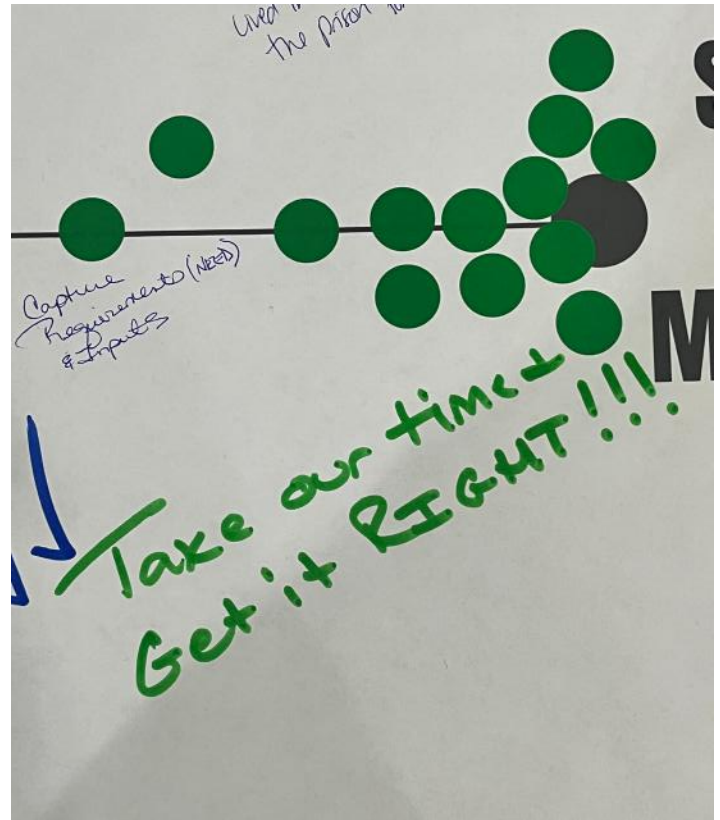
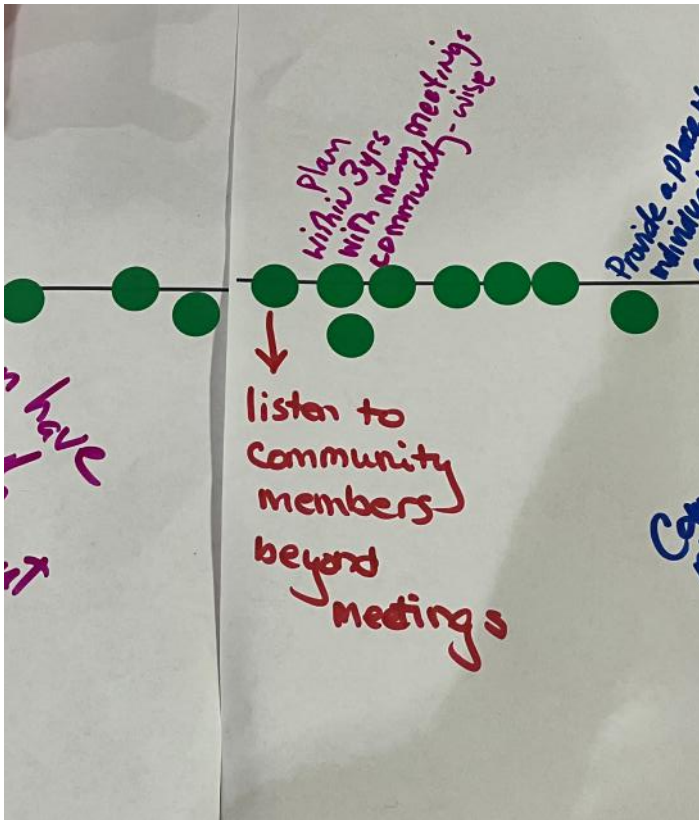
WHAT WE ASKED

The Development and Community Input engagement activity was designed to gather residents' feedback on the relationship between development timelines and the level of community involvement in the planning process.

Participants were given the option to express their preference for either:

1. Longer development timelines with greater opportunities for community input
2. Faster timelines with less community involvement

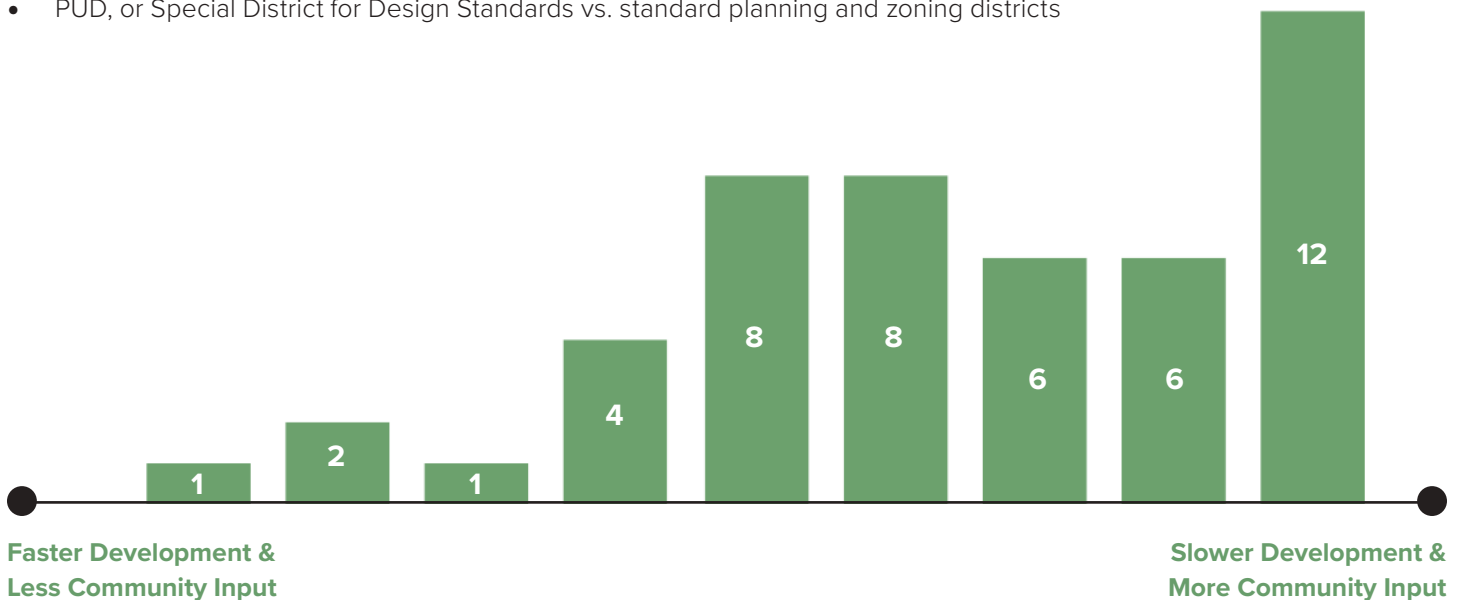
This approach allowed residents to indicate their position along the spectrum of input and influence, as well as the extent of their desired participation. It also highlighted the importance of ensuring that residents understand the full development process, including key stages such as bidding, design, securing entitlements, and construction. The results of the engagement activity also provided valuable insights into residents' priorities for the redevelopment of the future Indiana State Prison site.



WHAT WE HEARD

Most participants expressed a preference for longer development timelines that allow for greater community involvement and thorough review of the final project. Other factors associated with extended timelines and higher levels of community input include:

- Community/city-lead development process vs. ordinance led process
- Increased affordability and city mandated requirements vs. market rate with less incentives
- Master developer vs. multiple developers
- PUD, or Special District for Design Standards vs. standard planning and zoning districts



SHAPING SPACES TO FOSTER CONSENSUS

LAND USE TABLE



Community member thoughtfully completing the Land Use Table to indicate personal preferences for the density and composition of the site

RE-IMAGINATION PREFERENCES
TELL US YOUR VISION FOR THE INDIANA STATE PRISON SITE!

	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NO PREFERENCE
APARTMENTS	☐	☐	☐	☐
TOWN HOMES	☐	☐	☐	☐
BIKE PATHS	☐	☐	☐	☐
SHOPPING	☐	☐	☐	☐
PARKS	☐	☐	☐	☐
ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT	☐	☐	☐	☐
JOB CREATION	☐	☐	☐	☐
TOURISM	☐	☐	☐	☐
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES	☐	☐	☐	☐
OTHER:				

PREFERENCES (PLEASE CIRCLE)

Public Amenities	Greenery	Art	Recreation
☐ Public Amenities	☐ Greenery	☐ Art	☐ Recreation
☐ Public Amenities	☐ Greenery	☐ Art	☐ Recreation
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PARKS	☐	☐	☐	☐
ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT	☐	☐	☐	☐
JOB CREATION	☐	☐	☐	☐
TOURISM	☐	☐	☐	☐
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES	☐	☐	☐	☐
OTHER:				

PREFERENCES (PLEASE CIRCLE)

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☐ Public Amenities	☐ Greenery	☐ Art	☐ Recreation
☐ Public Amenities	☐ Greenery	☐ Art	☐ Recreation

Survey provided with the option for participants to provide individual preferences

WHAT WE ASKED

While participants filled out the Re-Imagination Preferences survey sheet, we took note of what was being recorded and asked follow-up questions based on response patterns. For example, many participants were marking “Low” as a preference under the Shopping category; this was a lead-in to ask why they felt strongly in this regard. Similarly, we noted that many participants were marking “High” as a preference under “Bike Paths”, and we were able to initiate conversations surrounding the theme of non-motorized transportation and connectivity. There were of course several participants who were eager to discuss a wide range of ideas relating to land use on the Indiana State Prison site, and we engaged them by asking questions surrounding the specific preferences circled on the survey sheet, while letting them express their ideas in conversation.

WHAT WE HEARD

MICHIGAN CITY DOES NOT NEED A LIGHTHOUSE OUTLETS 2.0

Calculated over 65 surveys, participants felt strongly that the Indiana State Prison site should not be themed as an additional shopping or retail-centric destination. They felt that the existing Lighthouse Outlets were an asset to the community, although they agreed that the lack of maintenance and the anti-urban design characteristics of the facility were not ideal. However, they feared that intense competition for name-brand retail on the site would weaken the viability of the Lighthouse Outlets while not being successful, creating a lose-lose situation. When asked about smaller, neighborhood-serving retail opportunities (such as a small grocery, bakery, etc.) on the Indiana State Prison site, participants were much more positive and elaborated that large-scale concentrations of name-brand retail is undesirable for the site.

STRONG PREFERENCE OF A NON-MOTORIZED, WALKABLE SITE

Participants were eager for the redevelopment of the Indiana State Prison site to facilitate opportunities for connectivity to the Indiana Dunes National Park and the potential redevelopment of the NIPSCO power plant site. In particular, solutions for non-motorized connectivity through the Indiana State Prison site to connect the larger community with these lakefront amenities were desired. Ideas mentioned included bike paths, walking paths, and park-like amenities to make a comfortable connection into Michigan City for tourists and visitors whose first stop in the community is the Dunes National Park. It was hoped that a friendly, safe, interesting, and inviting connection through a redeveloped site would encourage visitors to see the downtown area.

COMMUNITY PREFERRED JOBS AND HOUSING TYPES

Several other themes arose from our conversations, including the assertion that the Indiana State Prison site does not have the types of transportation links to the regional highway network that would be conducive to employment centers such as warehousing and logistics, and that these uses would be better placed at the moribund Marquette Mall site near Interstate 94. However, smaller-scale employment uses such as business incubator and office space were seen positively. Comments on housing types and preferences were mixed, with some participants noting a desire to see the site redeveloped with upscale, single-family product that they felt was lacking in the city, and others noting the need for a range of housing types (apartments, town homes, etc.) at a variety of price points to ensure affordability and diversity.

Category	Circles
Public Amphitheater	16
Grocery Store	32
Hotel	10
Apartments	18
Trails	28
Retail	16
Restaurants	19
Local Businesses	26
Civic Center	15
Pedestrian-Oriented	32
Vehicle-Oriented	4
Town Homes	13
Housing	31
Museum	19
Entertainment	21
Public Garden	31

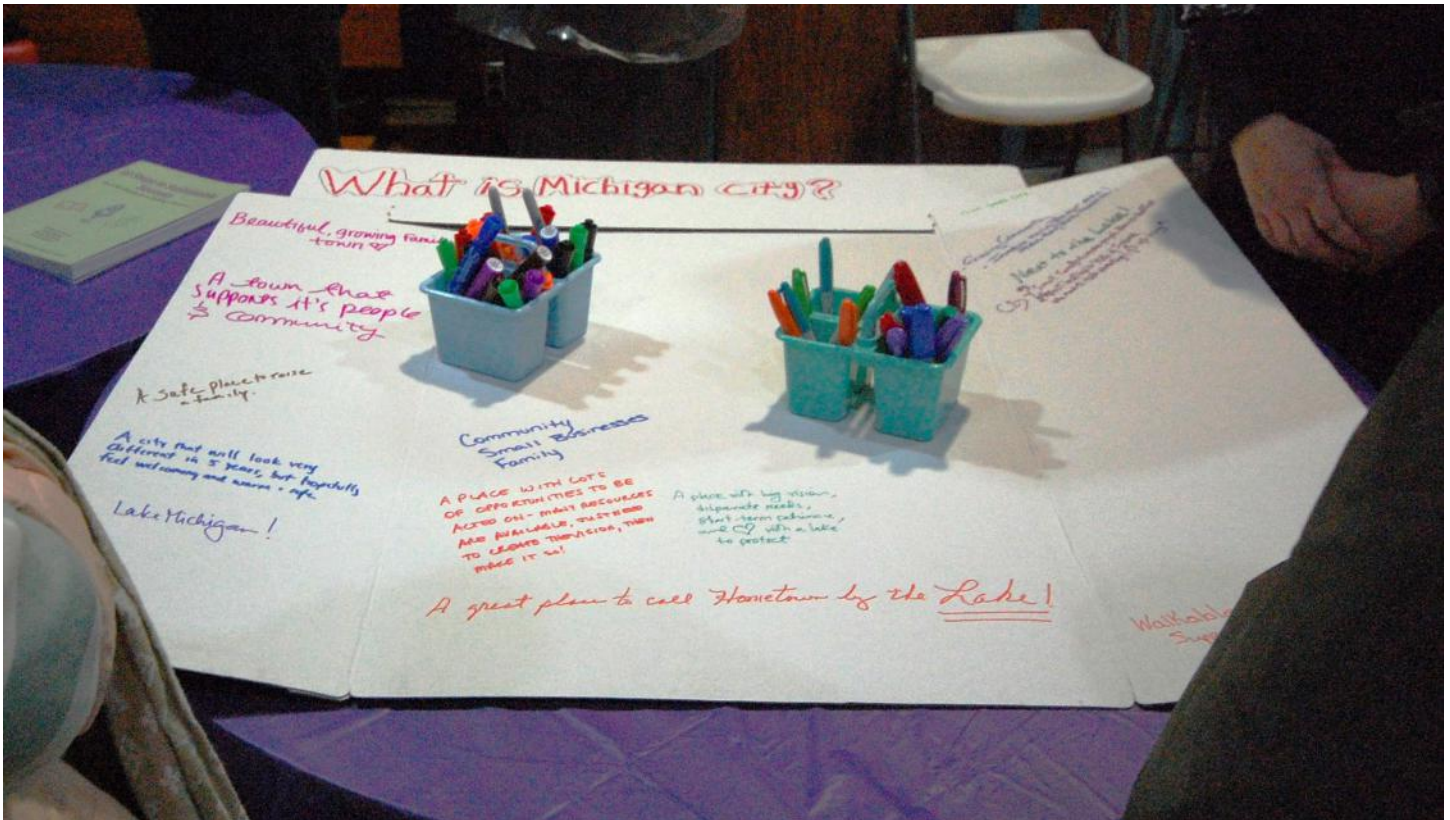
Result of multiple selection questions on the Land Use Survey

Category	High	Medium	Low	No Preference
Apartments	19	13	21	3
Town Homes	18	19	15	3
Bike Paths	34	13	6	3
Shopping	16	16	22	2
Parks	36	15	6	1
Entertainment Districts	19	18	16	1
Job Creation	31	18	6	2
Tourism	22	15	14	5
Development Opportunities	20	15	10	3

Result of multiple choice questions on the Land Use Survey

IMAGINING A VIBRANT FUTURE, TOGETHER

COMMUNITY TABLE



Community comments answering the question of what Michigan City means to them



Erin Meisner from EDCMC discussing Vibrant Michigan City with Public Meeting guests

WHAT WE ASKED

Participants were asked about questions they had regarding the flow of the project, their prior involvement with the Vibrant Michigan City plan, and if they were interested in getting more involved. We discussed the timeline and the slow rate of change, with construction probably taking decades, not months or years.

WHAT WE HEARD

Generally, people were very optimistic about the prospects of a new development site on the west side of town. They were eager for the potential of the site to create lasting change in their community and had several suggestions on how best to achieve those results. One woman described the prison as something that made Michigan City feel “damaged”. Although several people said they rarely interacted with or drive by the facility, they felt like Michigan City was closely associated with the prison from outsiders and believe its removal would help the overall image of Michigan City.

Several groups of participants discussed the desire to keep some memory of the prison. The walls were cited as potential options, although most people had little to no knowledge of any other buildings on the site. There was a general request to acknowledge “this was here”, without memorializing the prison itself.



Farr Associates President Mercedes Miley conversing with public meeting participants about potential community opportunities throughout the process of the project

MICHIGAN CITY IS...

- A place to realize your dreams
- A wonderful place to enjoy Lake Michigan
- Growing in the right direction, still inclusive!
- Beautiful, growing family town
- A town that supports its people and community
- A safe place to raise a family
- Community, small business, family
- A place with lots of opportunities to be acted on – many resources are available, just need to create the vision, then make it so!
- A great place to call hometown by the lake
- Cosmopolitan
- A place I call home that I would never move back to but family tends to bring you back. Loved raising my kids here.
- Nice small city
- Growing Community – investors moving into our area they're doing their homework!
- Next to the Lake!
- City with: #1 – small town feel where people know each other; #2 – Best location in the state of Indiana; We need to take advantage of #2 without losing #1
- Truly the Crossroads of America! Water, dunes, country, wetlands, etc.
- Naturally beautiful place with a diverse community that wants and NEEDS diverse opportunity

EVERYONE ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES!

DESIGN TABLE



Community members conversing to design their desired layout for the site at the Design Table



Community members getting creative with all available resources at the Design Table

WHAT WE ASKED

Design team members stood behind a large dry-erase map of the west side of Michigan City with a highlighted border around the Indiana State Prison site. The team facilitated interactions with the map to design various schemes and ideas for preferences for the site. Questions included:

- “The year is 2040 and everything on the site is exactly as you had pictured and dreamed of. What do you see?”
- “Do we want to use this land as a new front door to Michigan City or create a cohesive design with existing Michigan City?”

DESIGN TABLE ANALYSIS

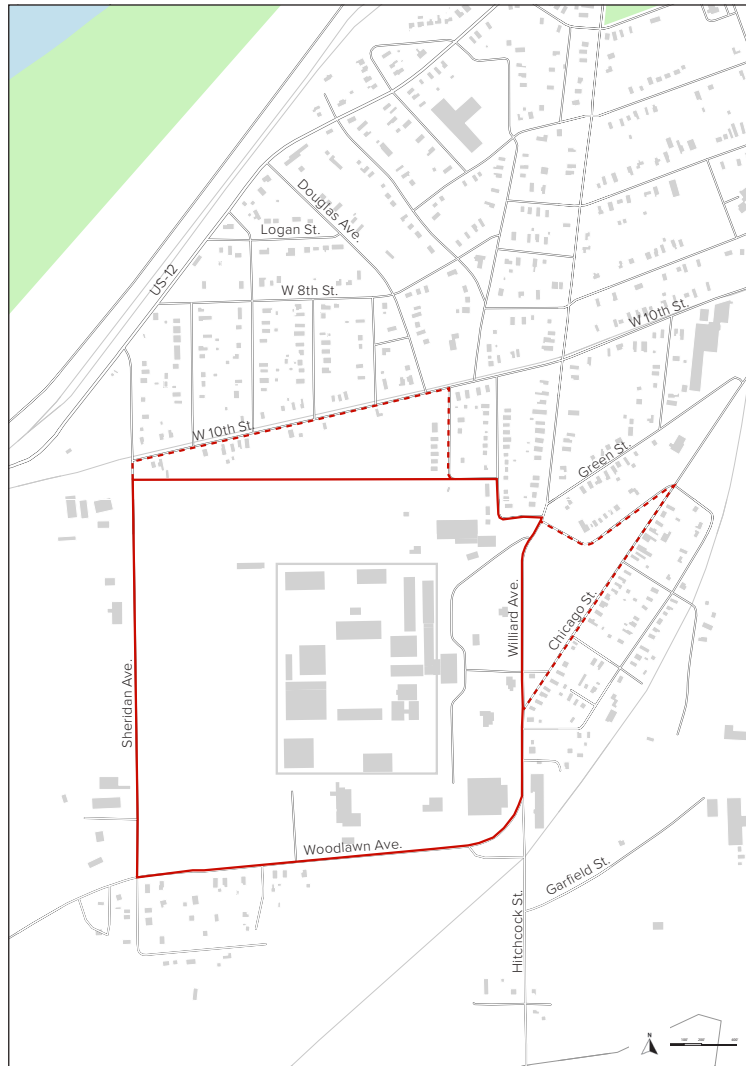
The design table ran through roughly four different charrette sessions, gathering suggestions in phases to fill up the site with community-preferred potentials. Many themes expressed interest in housing, land use, connecting the site to the nearby national park, and how to develop a site that benefits existing and future residents. One key topic discussed was the potential for adaptive reuse of existing structures on the site. A few residents of Michigan City expressed the interest in keeping the historic arch that had been covered up by the existing building standing near the entrance. Participants expressed the idea of removing most of the prison while preserving its memory due to its large influence in Michigan City.

COMMON THEMES...

“

CHILD CARE
GARDENS
CAROUSEL
GROCERY STORE
HOUSING IN OLD BARRACKS
SENIOR HOMES
DOG PARK
MIXED-USE HOUSING/RETAIL
MIDDLE-CLASS HOUSING
SPORTS COMPLEX
BIKE/HIKING TRAILS
MIXED-DENSITY

”



Basemap used for the Design Table activity

“

BEACH-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT
HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS
KEEP TOWERS
RESTAURANT IN TRAIN CAR
LODGE
ART SCHOOL
SOUTH SHORE LINE WHISTLER STOP
INDOOR TRACK
RECREATION CENTER
FARMERS MARKET
PRESERVE PRISON ARCH

”

COMMUNITY-DESIGNED SCHEMES





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