



2025 Survey Results

The Place of Remembrance

By Do Tank

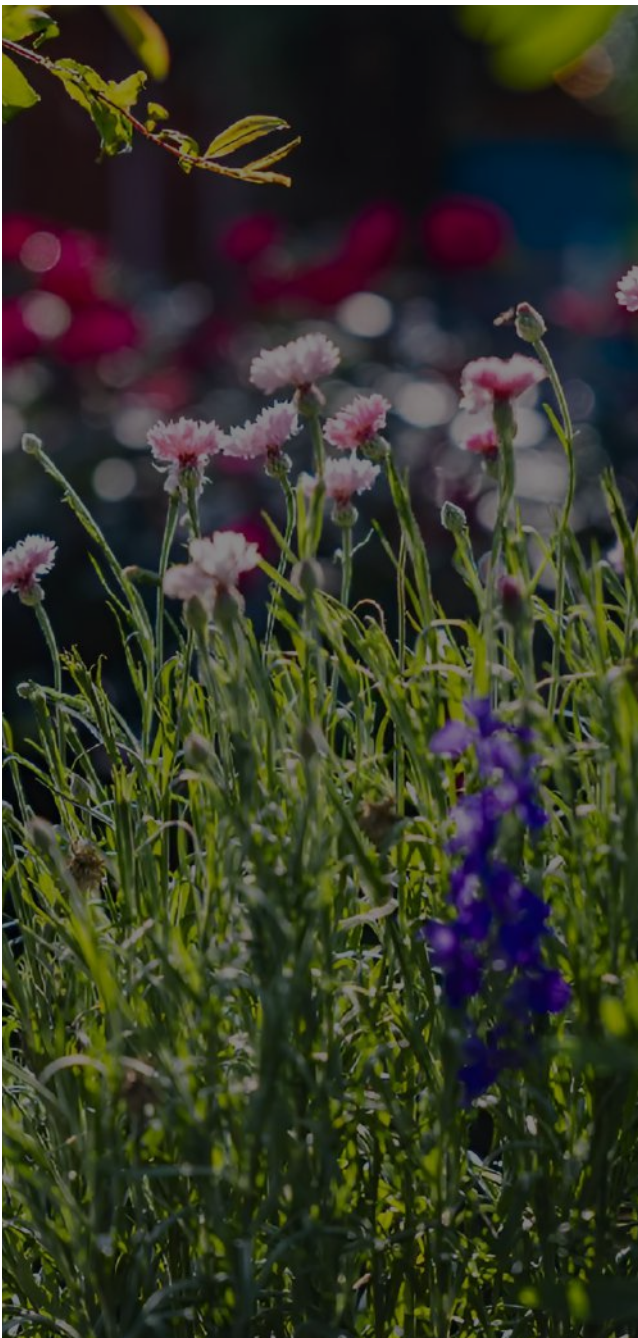
Written for the City of Highland Park

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Introduction

On July 4, 2022 a gunman opened fire at the City of Highland Park's Fourth of July parade. Seven people were killed, forty-eight people were injured and countless others were traumatized.



The City of Highland Park is undertaking a trauma-informed planning process to create a permanent place of remembrance that will pay tribute to the memory of the seven victims of the Highland Park shooting, create space(s) for reflection & remembrance, and honor the community's resiliency.

A working group was established to guide the planning process. The purpose of the working group is to facilitate all aspects of the planning for the permanent place of remembrance to provide recommendations to the City Council, the ultimate decision-making authority. The working group consists of Mayor Nancy Roter, Councilmember Tony Blumberg, City Manager Ghida Neukirch, City Resiliency Manager Madeline Kati, Park District of Highland Park Executive Director Brian Romes, Josselyn representative Gaby Valverde Strobehn, plus support from Assistant City Manager Emily Taub and Communications Manager Amanda Bennett. Working group meeting agendas and minutes are posted to the City's web site and in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Meeting updates have been provided to the City Council. Community members are invited and encouraged to attend and contribute to all meetings of the working group.

Community input has been integral to the process thus far and is considered before final decisions are made by the City Council. The goal has been to maximize the inclusion of different perspectives by offering multiple opportunities and formats to share feedback and ideas.

Vendor Consultant

The City of Highland Park has contracted Do Tank, a Chicago-based firm specializing in human-centered design and design research. We (Do Tank) use Human-Centered Design (HCD) methodology, a design process that centers stakeholder input and designs solutions from an in-depth understanding of the challenge at hand. Our approach to every project is to engage all constituent parts in research methods like focus groups, interviews, and surveys, ensuring all key stakeholders have a voice in the insights we present and the recommendations we suggest.

Please note the following language definitions for this report.

- “We” refers to Do Tank, and Do Tank only.
- “Community Members” refers to participants of the survey, interviews and focus groups who did not identify themselves as next of kin or present and injured.

Problem Statement

Do Tank was tasked with assisting the City of Highland Park in recommending a location for the place of remembrance from the shortlist of three sites identified, informed by collecting extensive community feedback and based on discussion at place of remembrance working group meetings.

This phase of work did not include soliciting feedback on the specific design elements of the place of remembrance. Following policy direction from the City Council regarding location at the April 14, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting, the City will issue a request for qualifications (RFQ) for design of the permanent place of remembrance. The RFQ will be posted to the City’s website and emailed to prospective respondents. The proposal period, including time for interviews with shortlisted firms, is expected to last through early summer 2025. The working group will review proposals and is expected to make a recommendation to the City Council at the August 18, 2025 City Council meeting. The selected firm will incorporate community engagement phases into their planning process, and the design, form, and features of the permanent place of remembrance will be considered at public meetings of the working group and the City Council, which has final decision-making authority.

For more information about the planning process, visit the City’s dedicated website at hpremembrance.org. The City welcomes feedback via email to remembrance@cityhpil.com.

Location Selection

Prior to this research process, the working group determined that the most viable location options for the place of remembrance were as follows; this information was affirmed with the City Council:

- Rose Garden
- Port Clinton Plaza
- SW Corner of St. Johns and Central

These locations were identified following research, public discussion, and input from community members of a list of sites throughout Highland Park. To learn more about the considerations taken into account in evaluating these locations, visit hpremembrance.org/meetings.



Our Process

First we interviewed City of Highland Park Resiliency Manager Madeline Kati, LCSW and Assistant City Manager Emily Taub to explicitly understand the objective of the community survey, focus groups, and one-to-one interviews. We reviewed City documents and meeting minutes from previous Working Group and Council Meetings to ensure we understood the work that had been done before our engagement with the community.

Then, we designed a 23-question comprehensive survey (made available in English, Spanish, Russian, and Polish) to solicit community feedback on the place of remembrance, and worked with the Resiliency Division to socialize the survey in the community. The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions to gather data on location preferences, features, priorities and community expectations. Our survey design prioritized clarity, relevance, and inclusivity to ensure that all community members, including residents, businesses, and other relevant stakeholders, had the opportunity to provide their input.

Once the survey was approved by the Resiliency Division, the City disseminated it to the community by posting the link to the survey on the City's main and place of remembrance websites, sharing it to social media, emailing it to the community in City e-newsletters, and posting it in physical newsletters and flyers. The City used a differentiated communication approach to ensure that messaging was tailored to the needs of the

different audience groups, including next of kin and individuals present & injured, Highland Park residents at large, and Highland Park businesses. Additionally, the City prepared a partner toolkit to assist its designated resource partners in spreading the word; the toolkit included graphics provided by our team that were made available for partner download, social media-ready videos in English and Spanish produced by the City, and copy for e-newsletters and social media in target languages. The City's resource and government partners promoted the survey several times to their constituents.

While the survey was open, we utilized the incoming data to develop trauma-informed questions for our focus groups and interviews, maintaining close contact with the Resiliency Division to receive feedback on our approach.

In January, we held one-to-one interviews and focus groups with members of the community. These included individuals who are next of kin to an individual whose life was taken in the Highland Park Shooting, those present & injured at the shooting and their family members, and community members present at the time of the shooting.

All community engagement concluded by January 29, 2025.

Analysis

Our analysis process took place from February 17 – March 28, 2025.

When analyzing the survey, we systematically examined both quantitative and qualitative responses to identify patterns, trends, and correlations that aligned with our research objectives. For focus groups, we transcribed discussions, coded themes, pulled quotes, and interpreted group dynamics to gain deeper insights into participants' shared perspectives and experiences. Similarly, when analyzing interviews, we categorized responses, identified key themes, pulled quotes, and drew meaningful conclusions based on individual narratives and sentiments.

To respect the wishes of the next of kin, as well as those who were present & injured, we have separated their responses across all data collection methods to better understand their perspectives. In this report, when significant differences appear between the responses of next of kin, those present & injured, and community members, we will highlight these differences and provide specific insights.

Engagement

938

Responses in 4 languages

We saw successful engagement with the data collection modalities. The survey was open to the community from November 20 through January 29, 2025, and our focus groups and interviews were all conducted in January 2025.

Survey

The average time spent on the survey was 8 minutes.

Using that data, the total time spent filling out the survey was 145 hours. The rough response rate was 63.2%. This number was calculated using clicks to the survey via the Remembrance website.

3 Online
focus
groups

1 In-person
focus group

5 Interviews

Focus Group & Interview

There were 28 participants in focus groups and interviews.

9 of those participants were present at the shooting, and 10 are next of kin, present & injured, or family of present & injured.

Thank you, Highland Park

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to every person who took the time to participate in this feedback gathering process. Your contributions were invaluable, and allowed us to holistically capture and understand the nuance of participant sentiments.

Attributions

This report was written by Human-Centered Designers: Alex Spiroff and Emily Blazer of Do Tank; designed by Visual Designer: Lauren Cox of Do Tank; and edited by the City Manager, Ghida Neukirch; Assistant City Manager, Emily Taub; City Resiliency Manager, Madeline Katí, LCSW; and Communications Manager, Amanda Bennett.

Recommendations

Our research & analysis have led us to the recommendation to have a prominent primary place of remembrance at the Rose Garden, a subtle secondary place of remembrance at Port Clinton.

We believe this recommendation to be the most human-centered choice from our holistic understanding of the surveys, focus groups, and one-to-one interview data. The following pages will provide that data, and provide further context for why we made this recommendation.



Survey, Focus Group, & Interview Feedback

Output Report

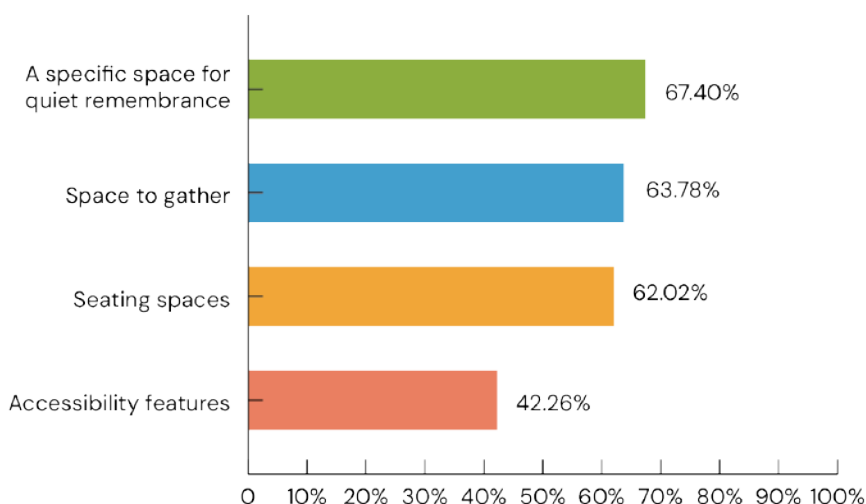
The following is the summarized analysis of qualitative and quantitative community feedback received via survey responses, interviews, and focus groups. We have distilled the insights gathered for clarity and prioritization, but include poignant direct quotes when possible. All feedback provided is shared anonymously, and we have not disclosed to members of the working group, City staff, or City Council the identity of any respondents. The community feedback process was structured to identify data from multiple demographic groups.

When there is a large difference in answers to survey questions, specifically from next of kin and present & injured and community members, or when the feedback we heard in our conversations differs, we will highlight that in the following summary.

Features & Priorities

In this section we highlight where we identified the most consistency between quantitative and qualitative data. Questions asking about features and priorities garnered relatively aligned top responses between all demographics and modalities.

Q: Which features do you think are most important when considering the location of the place of remembrance?



These are the top 4 features identified as being important to the community: a specific space for remembrance, space to gather, seating spaces, and accessibility features.

The least two desired features were identified as "restrooms onsite" and "ability for multimedia".

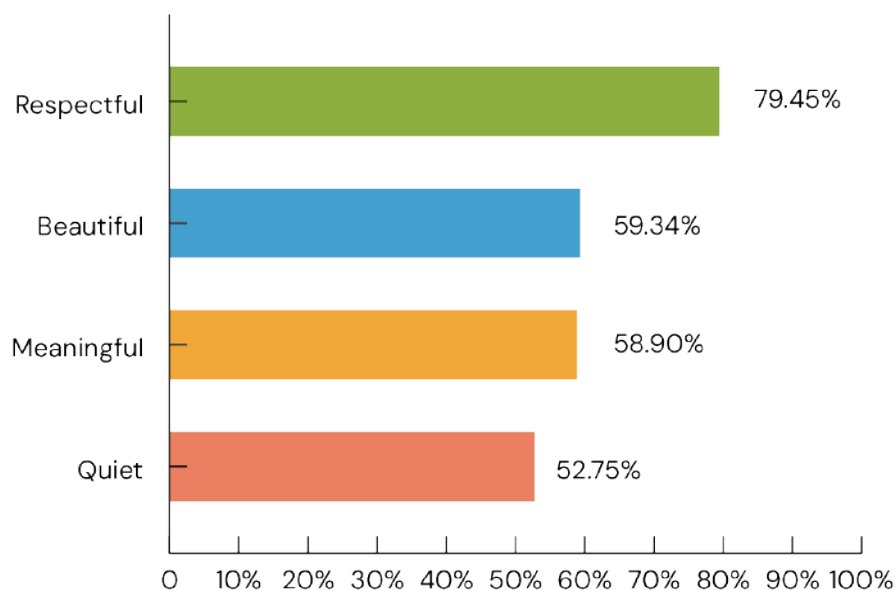
These top priorities were also reflected in the focus groups and interviews. Participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Specific space for quiet remembrance–**
This was frequently identified as most important.
- **Space to gather–**
Many expressed how they might use this place to congregate with their families.
- **Seating spaces–**
This was discussed as also being a feature of accessibility, along with providing a place for people to sit to spend extended time here.
- **Accessibility features–**
It was suggested that the place of remembrance have accessibility features beyond basic code compliance with ADA.

Q: It is important to me that the place of remembrance is...

These are the top 4 descriptors identified in the survey: respectful, beautiful, meaningful, and quiet.

The least selected adjectives to describe the place of remembrance were identified as "spacious" and "compact".



In our focus groups and interviews, key themes frequently discussed

Quiet – Contemplative, serene, a space for reflection and the ability to have a moment without distraction.

- "To me, quiet is important. Quiet and remembrance, I think it adds to the solemnness of the event as we are remembering what was lost."
- "I think quiet Remembrance is my number one."
- "Focusing on serene, natural, beautiful, a nice, quiet to the extent that it can be, a peaceful spot."

Family friendly – This meant accessible to families, as some mentioned bringing their kids to the place of remembrance. Participants elaborated that 'family friendly' did not mean the place of remembrance being designed for children (i.e. having a playground, or structures that encouraged play, was unanimously deemed inappropriate).

- "When I think of family-friendly, just maybe somewhere where if a family goes to visit and see it and stuff that kids could theoretically run around a little bit and not trip and hurt themselves, but not like... It doesn't need to be a playground there. I feel like that would be weird."

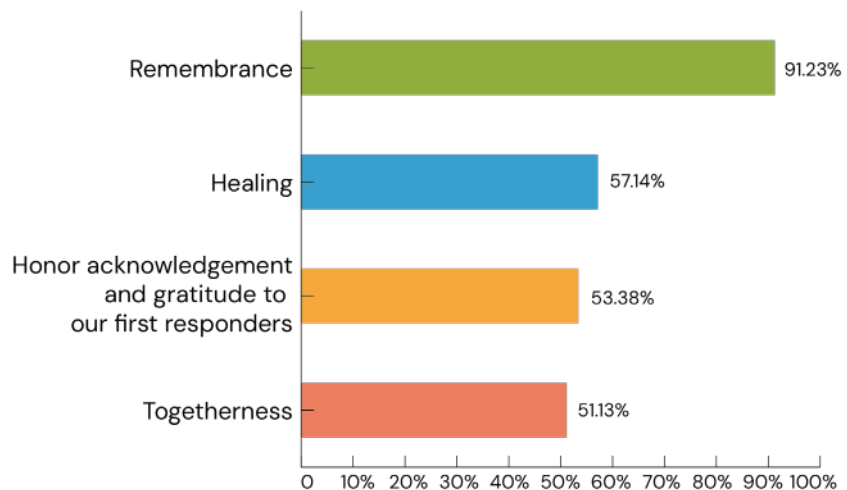
- "It was floated to me that there would maybe be an adaptive playground as part of one of the locations. I do not see it being appropriate for children, able-bodied or other, to be playing at a place of remembrance for [an event] where a great deal of trauma and tragedy occurred."

Respectful – Respectful to victims and their families, to those present & injured and their families, and considerate of impact and trauma experienced by the community.

- "I want to respect the families, and I don't want to forget those that were lost that day."
- "It needs to be a respectful location"
- "I think it's great that we are going to have a place to remember and gather. So in terms of respect... It's respectful to those that were victims that have passed away or that had suffered bodily harm or had mental health challenges."

Q: What do you hope the place of remembrance will achieve for the community?

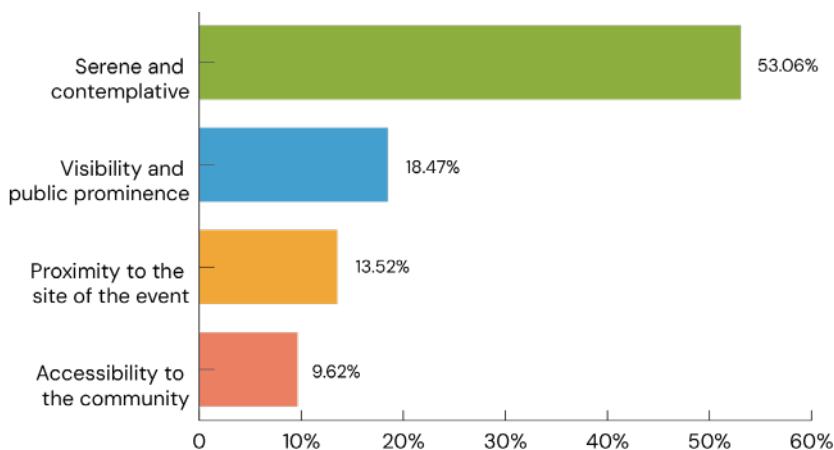
These are the top 4 goals identified in the survey: remembrance, healing, honor, acknowledgement and gratitude to our first responders, and togetherness.



In our focus groups and interviews, key insights that emerged were:

- 'Remembrance' is considered the overarching "umbrella" of other desired goals.
- Participants emphasized the importance of the place of remembrance being 'meaningful', 'informative', and 'reflective' of the community's resilience and togetherness.
- 'Healing' was identified as being a difficult goal because that looks and means something different to everyone, but there is a hope that this space encourages a personal healing journey.

Number one rankings of site descriptions:



In the survey we asked participants to rank six site descriptions in order from most important to least important.

The graph shows the four that were ranked number one the most.

When we asked this question in the focus groups and interviews, we heard very similar sentiments.

- Serene and contemplative atmosphere: The site should offer a peaceful and respectful environment conducive to reflection and remembrance.
- Accessibility to the community: The site should be easily accessible to those most affected by the tragedy, allowing for regular visitation and participation in future remembrance activities.
- Visibility and public prominence: The site should be in a prominent location to help raise awareness and ensure the place of remembrance serves as a visible reminder of the event and its significance.

Q: What are the top 3 things you want us to keep in mind when selecting a location for the place of remembrance?

Out of the 529 people that responded to this survey question, 2,000+ considerations were offered. The top five themes were—

Respect & Honor (80+ mentions) –

Ensuring the place of remembrance is respectful to victims, their families, and the community.

- "Respect for the victims and their families."
- "The memorial should feel present, but not forcefully in your face."
- "Tastefully honoring the memory of the victims in consultation with the families."

Quiet & Peaceful Environment (70+ mentions) –

Emphasis on a serene, contemplative, and non-intrusive space.

- "A quiet area, easily accessible."
- "Serene and quiet for reflection."
- "A place for contemplation and healing."

Names & Recognition (60+ mentions) –

Including names, photos, and biographical information of those whose lives were taken.

- "Include the names of those we lost."
- "Each tree on the Port Clinton Plaza should be named after each victim"
- "Information on deceased (if family approves)"

Accessibility (50+ mentions) –

Ensuring the space is accessible to all, including those with disabilities.

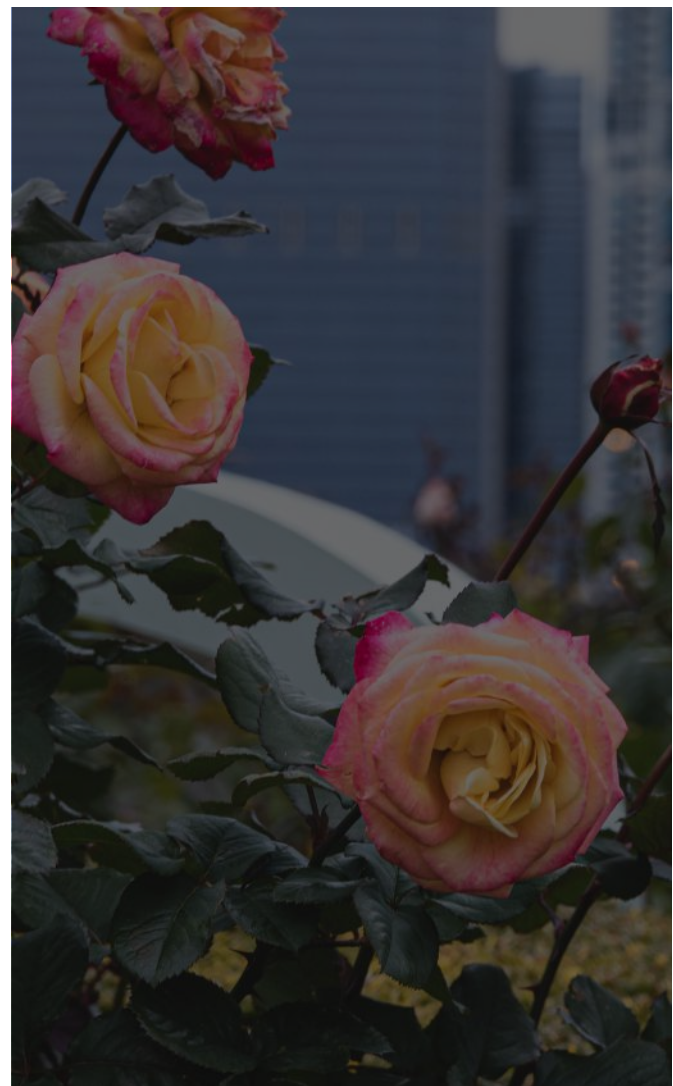
- "It should be accessible to all and be a remembrance for those who lost their lives but also honor those who helped others survive and the survivors who have been affected both mentally and physically."
- "Accessible for people with disabilities and welcoming to people who speak Spanish only."
- "ADA compliant in honor of [my loved one]."

Community & Unity (50+ mentions) –

A place for gathering, remembering, and strengthening communal bonds.

- "Create a place to gather and strengthen connections with our neighbors."
- "A place that brings the community together."
- "Honors all and brings the community together."
- See the appendix for the complete list of themes and supporting quotes.

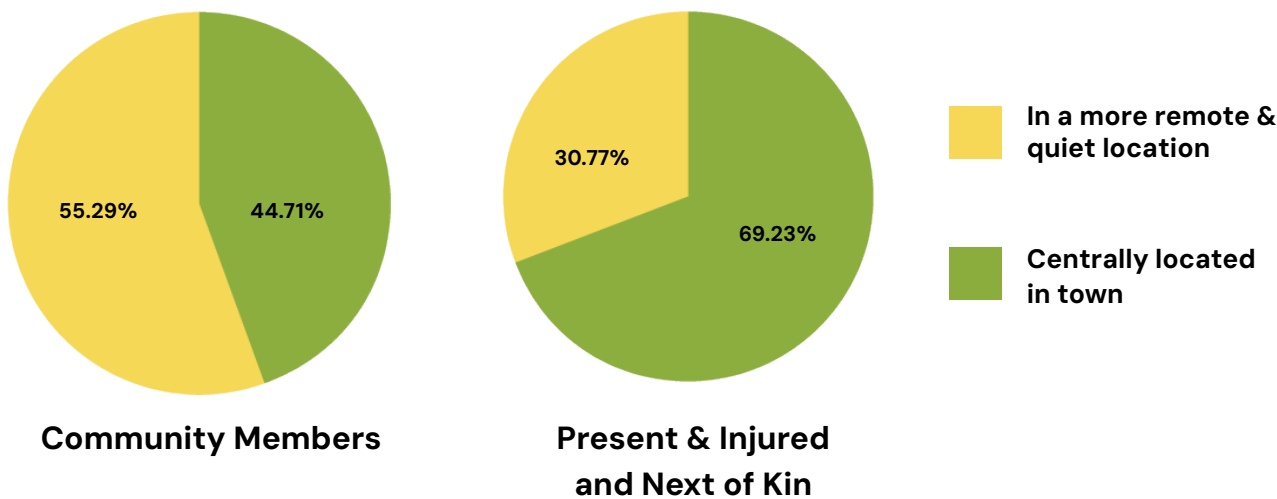
“I think the
fundamental emotion
is to remember, and
by remembering,
we honor”



Location Preference

For questions centered around the location preference we noted differences between different demographics: next of kin and present & injured and community members.

Q: Which location should host the primary place of remembrance?

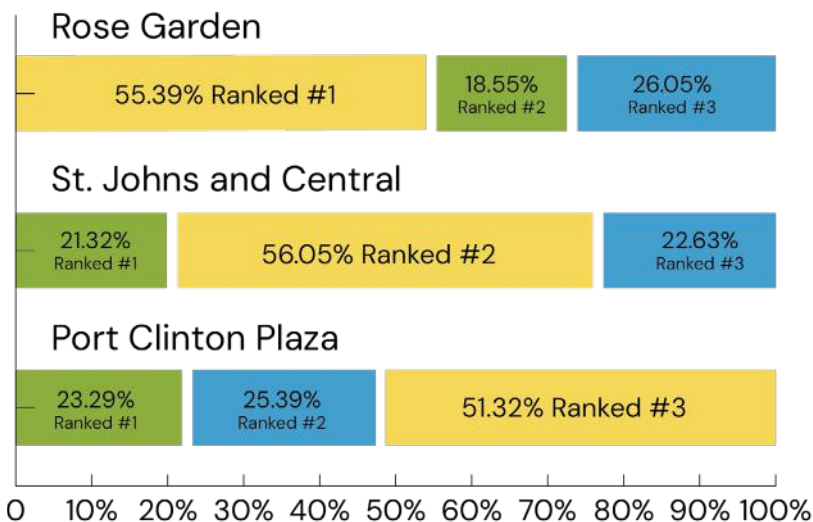


Output Report

Q: There are currently three primary site options for the place of remembrance being considered. Please rank your preference of the following locations from 1-3. (1-Most preferred, 3- Least preferred)

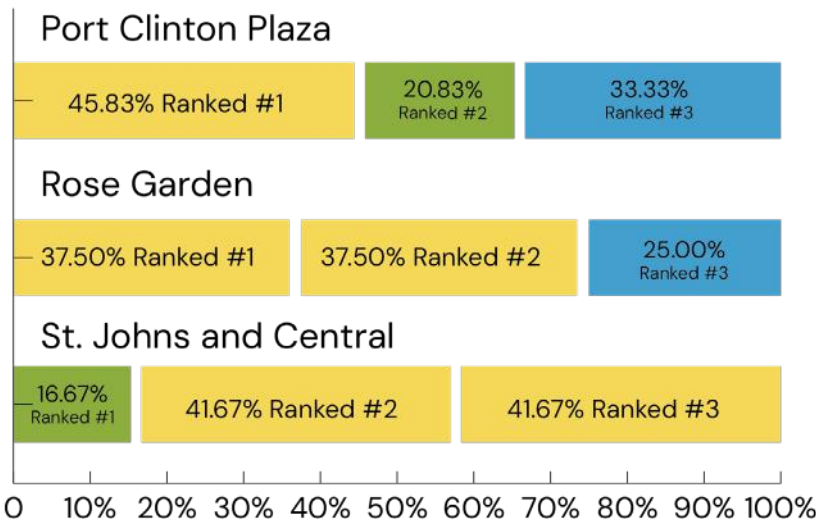
The following graphs show the order in which respondents ranked their preference for the primary location, from most frequently ranked #1 to most frequently ranked #3. (For example, 55.39% of Community Member respondents ranked The Rose Garden as their #1 preference.)

Community Members



The Rose Garden was most frequently ranked #1, making it the clear primary location choice for survey respondents identifying as community members.

Next of Kin and Present & Injured



With the next of kin and those present & injured, Port Clinton Plaza was most frequently ranked #1. The Rose Garden was equally ranked #1 and #2, making that location a secondary choice for this group.

Ranking Insights from Focus Groups and Interviews

When we posed this question in focus groups and interviews, the survey insights were validated. The majority of the community prefers the Rose Garden as the site of the primary place of remembrance.

- Next of Kin and Present & Injured have a high percentage of votes for Port Clinton as the primary place of remembrance.
- Neither group identified the SW corner of St. Johns and Central as a positive option for the primary place of remembrance.
- The combination of survey results and insights from our focus groups and interviews has led us to not immediately disqualify any locations, and consider how both of these groups could be accommodated.

Possible Location Positives and Concerns

Each possible location was discussed extensively in the survey, focus groups, and interviews, with positives and concerns expressed for each location. The following is a summary of those positives and concerns. These insights have been taken into consideration and were used to inform our recommendation.

Port Clinton Plaza:

Positives

- Proximity to the site of the shooting—this is where it happened
- Central location
- Reclamation of the space
- Acknowledging the shooting as a historical event, appropriate to have a historical marker
- Measure of future mass-violence prevention
- Remembrance requiring visibility

Concerns

- Lack of serenity/privacy
- Potentially retraumatizing, many have sensitivities with reactivity, PTSD, and anxiety at the site of the shooting.
- Not easily avoided
- Some participants have expressed sensitivities with reactivity, PTSD, and anxiety at the site of the shooting.
- Concern for the impact on businesses, space central to the commerce of the city

Rose Garden:

Positives

- Quiet, serene, and private atmosphere
- Intentionality, requires a conscious effort to visit
- Proximate to the site of the shooting, but offers a separate space for reflection
- Avoidable if one does not wish to engage
- Close to nature

Concerns

- Distance from site, disconnects the place of remembrance from the event
- Lack of Visibility/Accessibility: making it hard to find and potentially forgotten
- Lesser parking availability and access to public transportation.
- No particular connection to this location
- Perception of “hiding” what happened

St. John & Central:

Positives

- Proximity to Site, still considered close and connected to the events.
- Centrally located and visible, but not in the heart of the commercial district
- Proximity to Existing Memorials, creating a space dedicated to remembrance

Concerns

- Size/space, too small and cramped.
- The nearby intersection and train tracks create noise and distraction.
- Lack of privacy, too public and open.
- No significance to the shooting beyond being the location of the memorial art installation

Multiple Locations

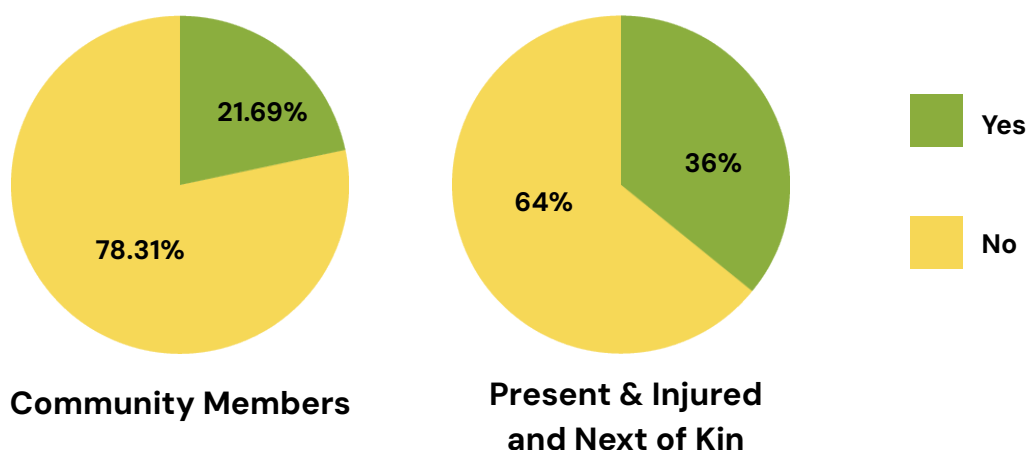
In the survey, we asked respondents if they were open to multiple locations for the place of remembrance and refrained from defining what multiple locations could mean.

‘Primary’ and ‘Multiple locations’ was the language we used, the term ‘secondary’ did not appear in the survey.

Based on insights gained from our focus groups and interviews, we noticed that people interpreted multiple locations as two primary places of remembrance.

These initial responses informed the conversations we had in our focus groups and interviews, as we sought to further explore participant sentiment around multiple locations.

Q: Do you support multiple locations for a place of remembrance?



We presented this question to focus groups and interviewees with a possible definition of “multiple locations” – a larger acknowledgement in one location and a smaller one in a second location. Providing this context proved crucial for their understanding and often changed their answer, which ultimately informed our recommendation. Participants who had strong feelings that there should only be one location were mostly against having any acknowledgement in Port Clinton Plaza, due to reasons mentioned previously. Participants were largely against having two prominent sites, or the prominent primary site being Port Clinton Plaza.

Participants were generally open to a subtle secondary site in Port Clinton Plaza, but many would like the option to engage with it or not. Many that first answered “No”, with conversation and explanation from fellow participants, were then open to a small acknowledgement at Port Clinton Plaza.

Specifically in our conversations where next of kin and those present & injured were present, we noticed that participants who were initially against any acknowledgement in Port Clinton Plaza, once they heard the perspective of other participants, changed their mind.

Next of kin and those present & injured who are in favor of the prominent primary site being at Port Clinton Plaza, expressed openness to the prominent primary place being in the Rose Garden as long as there is an acknowledgement in Port Clinton Plaza.

Some participants felt that having two locations is the best option to satisfy the largest number of community members, as it was acknowledged there is no way to please everyone.

Quotes about two locations from focus groups and interviews:

“I’m very in favor of two places because I think that is centered around those who were there, those most affected. Those who do want that more quiet contemplative place can go to the Rose Garden or wherever [the primary location] is, and those who want to be directly where it happened have that too.”

“I would like something that’s maybe not intrusive, but something to just mark the spot and to not be too remote.”

“If there’s some way to make [Port Clinton] so it’s not so triggering still... Would that be art or

something just to recognize those that lost their lives at that location. Not that that is the memorial or even a small one, but something there as acknowledgement.”

“I think that if you’re going to do two locations and you’re going to acknowledge the place where it happened, it has to be very subtle.”

“I like the idea of having two places, one for those that can go back to Port Clinton and remember, and then another place off-site where it’s not for me, and I’m sure I’m not alone, not quite so intense. The feelings there are powerful to me.”

Addressing the Purpose of Two Sites

We heard concerns that having two locations for the place of remembrance would “split” or “dilute” the impact. If two locations are selected, we recommend clearly communicating the different objectives of each site and why this decision was made.

- The primary place of remembrance in the Rose Garden will provide a space for the community to quietly reflect in a serene setting.
- A smaller, subtle acknowledgment in Port Clinton marks the site of the shooting in a meaningful way to honor those whose lives were taken and those whose lives were forever changed.

The community requests the choice to be guided by impacted families.

“[We want you to keep in mind] the victim’s families and their feelings and opinions.”

“I think what the families of the victims want is the most important.”

“Please take whatever consensus families of the victims have, as the #1 driving factor for the memorial. I was there and friendly with one of the victims, but even though affected greatly, the families and surviving victims’ wishes should be respected first and foremost.”





“There should be as many places as the families who lost family members would like to have... There is not a perfect spot for every grieving family member.”

Appendix

Port Clinton Positives:

Survey response themes:

- Proximity to the site of the shooting: Many feel it is important to remember the victims where the tragedy occurred.
- Central Location: Easy access, high visibility, and foot traffic ensure the place of remembrance will be seen by many and serve as a constant reminder to those who feel strongly that the purpose of the place of remembrance is to ensure the tragedy is not forgotten.
- Reclamation: Some believe placing the place of remembrance at the site helps reclaim the space and transform it from a place of tragedy to one of remembrance and healing.

"Authenticity"

"Geographical recognition, meaningful impact"

"Symbolic location"

"It's direct, proud, fearless and accurate."

Focus Groups & Interview Themes

- This is where the shooting took place and there is a desire to acknowledge that in some way. This space has a heavy significance for many people.
- There is importance in acknowledging the shooting as a historical event, so it would be appropriate to have a marker at Port Clinton. This was also discussed as an appropriate nod to preventing future mass violence.
- Remembrance requires some level of visibility.

"[Port Clinton] is where our family goes to mourn. We will continue to go there and mourn."

"[The memorial behind city hall] is not really a historical marker. It's remote from the side of the shooting, and it's hidden away. And I see the conflict between, in some ways, not wanting to be in people's face, not triggering them, wanting to avoid a negative impact on local business, etc. But on the other hand, I think you also want some historical accuracy. You don't want to forget what happened."

"My thought is there should be something that people could see. There should be something that will cause you to stop, even if it's just for a few seconds. I don't care if my [loved one's] name is there. But just something to remind people."

"We don't choose where people are shot and killed."

Port Clinton Concerns:

Survey Top 3 Themes

- Lack of Serenity/Privacy: The busy, commercial nature of the area, with noise from traffic, trains, and events, is not conducive to quiet contemplation or respectful remembrance. Many worry it won't be a peaceful space.
- Retraumatizing: The location is too close to the site of the shooting, potentially activating painful memories for survivors and others.
- Lack of Avoidance: Some worry that those who wish to avoid reminders of the tragedy would be unable to do so, effectively making the downtown area less accessible to them.

"Too public and triggering for survivors."

"With so many people walking in that area, eventually it may become ubiquitous."

"Busy area; not quiet or reflective."

Focus Groups & Interview Themes

- Participants have expressed sensitivities with reactivity, PTSD, and anxiety at the site of the shooting.
- Port Clinton can be loud, crowded, and not private.
- There is a concern for the impact on businesses, that Port Clinton is too central to the commerce of the city.
- Central location, so it's not easily avoided if people wish not to engage with it.

"I feel like Port Clinton is a bit of a sacred space for me. Because of that, I don't want a big thing there because I don't want people traipsing around where I saw bodies lying."

"I personally don't like Port Clinton, where it happened, because so much else happens at Port Clinton that I just don't think it would be respectful."

"My larger concern with Port Clinton Square is that that's going to be a memorial forever for anybody that was there, regardless of whether or not there's some little mini memorial there... I know part of healing is going back to these places and fully participating in the community, but at the same time, it just makes it unavoidable, for better or worse."

Rose Garden Positives:

Survey top 3 themes

- Quiet, serene, and private atmosphere: The garden setting is seen as beautiful and peaceful, conducive to reflection and remembrance.
- Intentionality: The location requires a conscious effort to visit, allowing for a more personal and intentional experience, and avoiding constant, unwanted reminders for those who don't wish to be reminded.
- Proximity (but distance): It is near the site of the shooting but not at the site, offering a balance between proximity and a separate space for reflection.

"Central, quiet, contemplative, spacial, green"

"Peaceful, somewhat private, and decide to go or avoid."

"More serene, quiet space that allows people to reflect and honor the victims and our community."

Focus Groups & Interview Themes

- The Rose Garden is a place that you can purposefully choose to visit, but avoid if you do not wish to engage.
- The Rose Garden is removed, private, and close to nature.
- The location was identified as being calm, quiet, and a suitable spot for quiet reflection.

"My fairly strong choice is to put it in the Rose Garden for a number of reasons, because it is a space for reflection and calm and private."

"The Rose Garden site seems to be the most congenial to achieving most or all of our goals because of the space and the location."

"It's part of our history. We should incorporate it there as it is and honor it and remember it. But I don't think we want the city to be actually permanently labeled with that as the number one thing people think about. With all that in mind, I favor the Rose Garden location. It's the one that is the most off the beaten track, but still certainly available. It is a green space, there are trees there. It's away from traffic and would be a place that, to me, would be the place where one could come for quiet and peace and remembrance, either alone or with others close to you."

Rose Garden Concerns:

Survey Top 3 themes

- Distance from Site: The distance from the shooting location is seen as a major drawback, with some feeling it disconnects the place of remembrance from the event itself.
- Lack of Visibility/Accessibility: The location is considered "off the beaten path," "hidden," or "tucked away," making it hard to find and potentially forgotten. Some worry it will only be visited intentionally, rather than encountered organically.
- Parking/Transportation: Concerns were raised about parking availability and access to public transportation.

"It feels like we are trying to sweep away what happened to us by putting it in a space that's disconnected from the event itself and where the community wanted to gather after it happened."

"Awkward access and parking challenges. Also feels like it is tucked away as if trying to be forgotten."

"Seems unconnected to the event."

Focus Groups & Interview Themes

- Many participants expressed not feeling a particular connection to this location.
- The Rose Garden is more remote, could be considered "out of the way" or "hidden".

"If you tuck it away in a corner of the Rose Garden, does it get forgotten?"

"What is a memorial if no one sees it?"

"I accept the memorial behind City Hall for what it is. I mean, it's a place for quiet contemplation. But it's not, on the other hand, really a historical marker. It's remote from the site of the shooting, and it's hidden away."

St. Johns & Central Positives:

Survey Top 3 Themes

- Proximity to Site: While not at the exact location of the shooting, it is still considered close and connected to the events.
- Visibility/Accessibility: It is centrally located and visible, ensuring it will be seen and remembered, but without being in the heart of the commercial district.
- Existing Memorials: Its proximity to the Veterans Memorial and previous location of the memorial art installation seen as fitting, creating a space dedicated to remembrance.

"This was the natural place of remembrance that the community chose as a place of gathering and remembrance after the shooting. I feel like we need to honor this space and recognize where the community wanted it to be."

"It's across from the veterans memorial and had a memorial there after the Fourth that many visited. It's also not right in the center of Port Clinton so it's not as constant a reminder in this location for those who may not want to always think of it."

"It's near the area of the shooting, but far enough away for people not to be triggered"

Focus Groups & Interview Themes

No one selected this as their preferred location or mentioned any positives for this location

St. Johns & Central Concerns:

Survey Top 3 Themes

- Size/Space: Many find the space too small and cramped, potentially limiting place of remembrance design and crowd size for gatherings.
- Traffic/Noise: The nearby intersection and train tracks create noise and distraction, potentially disrupting quiet contemplation and remembrance. Some also mention safety concerns due to traffic.
- Lack of Privacy: The location is considered too public and open, lacking privacy for those seeking a quiet, personal experience.

"Too busy with traffic, not quiet or serene"

"Small scale, little separation from vehicular traffic, distance from the location of the event"

"Worst alternative— distant from the site of the tragedy and not conducive to meditative consideration."

Focus Groups & Interview Themes

- St. Johns & Central was perceived as being too busy, too open to traffic and passers by.
- This location has no significance to the shooting beyond being the location of the memorial art installation, which some mentioned but was not an influential factor of consideration.

"I really don't like the St. Johnson Central Street location. It is too much in the middle of the commerce of the city."

Q: What are the top 3 things you want us to keep in mind when selecting a location for the place of remembrance?

Out of the 529 people that responded to this survey question, 2,000+ considerations were offered. The top themes were—

Respect & Honor (80+ mentions) – Ensuring the place of remembrance is respectful to victims, their families, and the community.

- “Respect for the victims and their families.”
- “The memorial should feel present, but not forcefully in your face.”
- “Tastefully honoring the memory of the victims in consultation with the families.”

Quiet & Peaceful Environment (70+ mentions) – Emphasis on a serene, contemplative, and non-intrusive space.

- “A quiet area, easily accessible.”
- “Serene and quiet for reflection.”
- “A place for contemplation and healing.”

Names & Recognition (60+ mentions) – Including names, photos, and biographical information of those whose lives were taken.

- “Include the names of those we lost.”
- “Each tree on the Port Clinton Plaza should be named after each victim”
- “Information on deceased (if family approves)”

Accessibility (50+ mentions) – Ensuring the space is accessible to all, including those with disabilities.

- “It should be accessible to all and be a remembrance for those who lost their lives but also honor those who helped others survive and the survivors who have been affected both mentally and physically.”
- “Accessible for people with disabilities and welcoming to people who speak Spanish only.”
- “ADA compliant in honor of [my loved one].”

Community & Unity (50+ mentions) – A place for gathering, remembering, and strengthening communal bonds.

- “Create a place to gather and strengthen connections with our neighbors.”
- “A place that brings the community together.”
- “Honors all and brings the community together.”

Location Considerations (50+ mentions) – Debate over placement; near the event vs. a separate, secluded space.

- “Not to place in an area that defines HP for years immemorial. So more remote than for us to look at every time we’re in the heart of town.”
- “Locate where the event occurred.”
- “Should be centrally located so all can see and remember.”

Privacy & Non-Intrusiveness (40+ mentions) – Balancing remembrance without forcing a reminder on everyone.

- “A quiet, private place for reflection and remembrance.”
- “Not an unavoidable visual trigger.”
- “Allowing visitors to opt into visiting (shouldn’t encounter accidentally and be retraumatized).”

Aesthetic & Design (40+ mentions) – Calls for a beautiful, well-maintained, and timeless design.

- "Needs to be beautiful, tasteful."
- "A well-landscaped, well-cared-for space with plenty of shade and a reflecting pool."
- "Make it timeless. No multimedia. No religious symbols, language."

Seating & Gathering Spaces (35+ mentions) – Providing benches and seating for quiet reflection.

- "A bench or appropriate place to seat some visitors."
- "A place that has an opportunity for quiet reflection, interaction with the display itself, interaction with others."
- "Have enough seating for people."

Avoiding Political & Commercial Aspects (30+ mentions) – Avoiding commercialization, political messaging, or religious overtones.

- "No politics. No religion. Nothing for sale or donations."
- "Please keep social media to a minimum to respect victims and citizens' privacy."
- "Do not make it artificially large; a living thing would be good—like a tree."

Nature & Landscaping (30+ mentions) – Incorporating plants, flowers, and natural elements.

- "Alive with plants/maybe even native plants to attract pollinators – like supporting life."
- "Floral abundance and symbolism of floral selections (all perennials)."
- "Surrounded by beautiful foliage. A place for sitting and kneeling."

Security & Maintenance (25+ mentions) – Ensuring cleanliness, upkeep, and protection from vandalism.

- "A space that can be well-maintained—hopefully not strewn with litter, etc."
- "Security, security, security."
- "Must be beautifully maintained and managed."

Minimizing Retraumatization (20+ mentions) – Avoiding overly graphic or traumatic elements.

- "Not an unavoidable reminder."
- "Make sure that info presented is not triggering to those affected (especially children)."
- "Privacy but still centrally located enough that it's not out of the way, and seemingly forgotten."

Recognition of First Responders & Survivors (20+ mentions) – Honoring those who helped during and after the tragedy.

- "Recognition of the heroes & how the community came together."
- "Thanks to our local law enforcement and firefighters for their quick response and dedication to keeping our community safe."
- "Remembering the first responders and all who provided aid."

Symbolism & Art (15+ mentions) – Using artistic elements to convey meaning without being overly literal.

- "Artistic sensibility & meaningfulness."
- "Make it sensory! Grounding is a huge part of managing a trauma response."