

MARTINSVILLE MOMENTUM **ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY**

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Overview

During the Martinsville Momentum Comprehensive Plan update process, the City of Martinsville and Berkley Group sought a variety of public and stakeholder input. Opportunities for residents included a public survey, seven focus groups, and four drop-in events. The survey was open to the public and sought general feedback on various planning topics related to transportation, infrastructure, land use, housing, and economic development. The focus groups were small group meetings with identified stakeholders to gain insight and perspective on various topics relevant to the Comprehensive Plan. The drop-in events were generally informal, self-paced opportunities to hear from residents regarding priorities for Martinsville's future.

Public input was consistent across all forms of engagement. Most participants have a positive opinion of Martinsville - citing quality of life and affordability as the primary reasons. Major themes across all forms of engagement included economic development, additional housing, crime reduction, and the need to improve public schools.

Survey

The survey was conducted both electronically and in paper form and was advertised by the City on its website; on its social media pages; and via distribution of flyers, newsletters, and post cards at events.

Drop-In Events

Drop-In events were conducted at various times and locations throughout Martinsville. The events were held as opportunities to share general feedback on various planning-related topics. All drop-in events were open to the public and chosen at central and accessible locations to reach residents of all ages.

Focus Groups

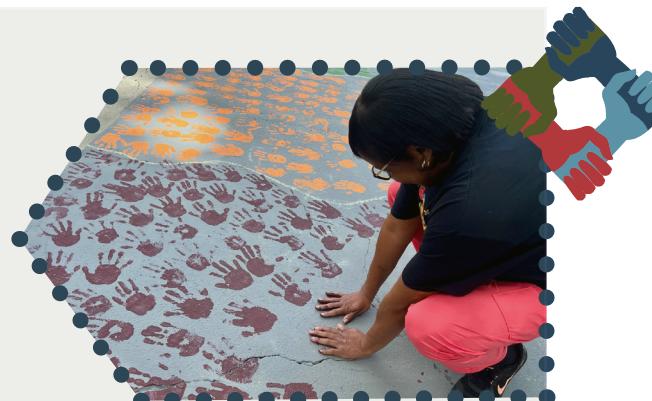
There were seven groups in total, occurring throughout the initial public engagement phase. Each group was composed of stakeholders chosen by City staff for their knowledge of the subject and for their roles within that area of focus in the community.

KEY THEMES



Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development

- Residents want more living wage jobs, career advancement opportunities, and support for small businesses.
- Residents expressed strong support for revitalizing Uptown and blighted areas to spur investment.



Community Identity, Arts, and Culture

- Residents called for investments in public art, local history and community festivals.
- Coordination of cultural programming and wayfinding is needed to strengthen Martinsville's identity and pride.



Affordable and Quality Housing

- Residents want more affordable and diverse housing options.
- Many residents are housing cost-burdened, and neighborhoods suffer from blight and disinvestment.
- Mixed-use and infill development are supported, particularly in Uptown.

Public Safety, Social Services, and Infrastructure

- There is a shortage of mental health services, drug treatment programs, and support for vulnerable populations.
- Residents want a year-round shelter, more youth programs, and targeted maternal health and recovery services.
- While local opportunities for higher education are highly regarded, public-school quality and facilities are a concern.
- Parks and recreational facilities are valued but need improved maintenance and modernization.



Governance, Communication, Equity, and Trust

- There is widespread frustration with local leadership, citing a lack of transparency, unity, and professionalism.
- Residents want clearer, more proactive communication about services, events, and opportunities.
- A coordinated, visionary approach is essential to restore public trust and momentum.
- Stakeholders emphasized the importance of breaking down silos between the City, County, and service providers.



Overview

A public survey was conducted as part of the public input process for the Martinsville Momentum Comprehensive Plan. The survey was available both in digital and paper format from February 11, 2025 to May 15, 2025. The survey was composed of 16 questions; 11 of these were questions on specific topics, one was open ended, and four were optional questions for demographic analysis purposes.

The survey received responses to data gathering questions from 201 respondents. Nearly half (49%) of respondents listed Precinct 005 as their primary residence, while 10% of respondents indicated that they did not live in the City. Most respondents learned about the survey through a City newsletter/email or through social media. Most respondents identified as white, with 17% identifying as Black or African-American. Responses came from a mixed range of age cohorts, except for those aged 24 or younger, which accounted for less than 2% of total respondents.

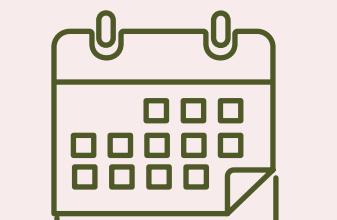
Summary

The survey results were consistent with other public input events. The recurring themes throughout the survey responses center around overall economic opportunity, revitalization, and increased social programs.

Respondents consistently identified the need for well-paying jobs, career development, and support for small businesses as essential to Martinsville's future. Concerns about crime, blight, and the lack of affordable, quality housing were prominent, as well as a need for improved public education and access to job training. Respondents feel that the City does not do enough to inform residents about available services and opportunities and want better communication on available events, services, and amenities. In terms of infrastructure and neighborhoods, respondents want to see neighborhood revitalization and improved walkability.



“Thriving”
The most common word respondents used to describe their vision for Martinsville 20 years from now.



February 11, 2025
through
 May 15, 2025

Question 1

To thrive in Martinsville over the next decade, my family and I will most need...

Summary: Respondents believe that to thrive over the next decade, the most critical needs are safe neighborhoods with low crime and strong community connections (65.67%) and well-paying jobs and career growth opportunities within the city (63.68%). High-quality and affordable housing; high-quality education facilities; and accessible parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities all received responses in the 30 percent range. Less than 20% of respondents chose safe and reliable public transportation and walkable streets.

Key Themes:

- **Sense of community**
- **Safety**
- **Economic Opportunity**

Takeaway: The two identified “needs” significantly outpace other needs, suggesting that economic security and public safety/community cohesion are top concerns for most respondents. Public transportation and walkability were the lowest priority at 19.9%, indicating it may be less of a perceived issue for the majority at this time.

Question 2

What should Martinsville prioritize as it plans for the future?

Summary: The top three responses were improving the economy and access to well-paying job opportunities (69%), improving public education and workforce development (66%), and addressing blight and disinvestment (30%). Other notable areas with moderate concern include public safety enhancement and housing availability. Lower priorities include environmental preservation, historical resources, and transportation infrastructure.

Key Themes:

- **Neighborhood revitalization**
- **Economic development**
- **Workforce and education**

Takeaway: Martinsville residents have a strong desire for a stronger economic foundation, better job training and schools, and reinvestment in neglected areas.

Question 3

What transportation improvements are needed in Martinsville?

Summary: Respondents overwhelmingly believe that general road maintenance is the most urgently needed transportation improvement, with 76% selecting it. Other notable priorities include sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian paths (42%), and expanded or improved public transit and ridesharing and mobility options, both in the 30 percent range. Traffic congestion mitigation was listed as the lowest priority. Additional write-in responses reinforced the need for road maintenance and pedestrian infrastructure but also identified a need for better traffic enforcement – particularly for speeding.

Key Themes:

- **Road repair and maintenance**
- **Pedestrian accessibility**
- **Transit**
- **Enforcement**

Takeaway: Most residents feel that road maintenance needs the most attention moving forward, followed by improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and better enforcement of traffic violations (speeding, etc.).

Question 4

Would you agree or disagree with the following statements related to housing availability and quality?

Summary: Most respondents agreed with the statements “my housing is safe, well-maintained, and free of health hazards” (72%) and “I spend more than 30% of my annual household income on housing costs” (69%). At the same time, most respondents disagreed with the statements “residents of all income levels can find housing they can afford in Martinsville” (65%), “Martinsville has enough housing supply to meet demand” (59%), and there is a good mix of housing types to meet residents’ needs” (57%).

Key Themes:

- **Housing affordability**
- **Housing supply and variety**
- **Cost-burdened residents**

Takeaway: While most respondents feel their own housing is safe and well-maintained, a significant majority are burdened by high housing costs and believe Martinsville lacks affordable, adequate, and diverse housing options for all income levels.

Question 5

Would you agree or disagree with the following statements related to neighborhoods and community connectivity?

Summary: Responses show mixed opinions on neighborhoods and community connectivity. Roughly 46% of respondents agreed with the statement, “my neighborhood is well-connected to other parts of the City by public transportation, sidewalks, and roads” while 41% disagreed. A similar split in responses was given for the statement, “I am happy with the quality of development in my neighborhood” – 48% of respondents agreed while 39% disagreed.

Most respondents (67%) view blight as a significant problem in Martinsville neighborhoods. And most (61%) disagreed with the statement, “I can safely walk or bike to community amenities, such as parks, grocery stores, and healthcare.” Most respondents (66%) are interested in more mixed-use developments that combine housing, retail, and services.

Key Themes:

- **Walkability**
- **Neighborhood blight**
- **Mixed-use development**

Takeaway: Respondents expressed strong interest in walkability and mixed-use development and reported significant challenges with safe pedestrian access and blight in existing neighborhoods. While opinions on neighborhood connectivity and development quality are mixed, there is clear concern about deteriorating conditions and limited infrastructure for pedestrian transportation.

Question 6

Would you agree or disagree with the following statements related to economic development and the workforce?

Summary: Most respondents disagreed with the following statements, “there are sufficient opportunities in Martinsville to improve my job skills and career development (66%), “small business owners and entrepreneurs in Martinsville have the tools and resources they need to be successful (48%), “most jobs in Martinsville pay a living wage (68%), and “there is a good mix of job opportunities in Martinsville (75%). Less than 20% of respondents agreed with any of these statements.

Key Themes:

- **Small business support**
- **Increased wages and jobs**
- **Workforce and career development opportunities**

Takeaway: Respondents perceive Martinsville’s local economy as limited – with insufficient job diversity, low wages, and inadequate support for workforce development and small business success.

Question 7

Would you agree or disagree with the following statements related to education?

Summary: Most respondents (61%) agreed with the statement, “Higher education is an attainable goal for Martinsville’s children.” However, most disagreed with the statement, “Martinsville’s public schools provide a high-quality education.” Responses show mixed opinions on whether public school facilities are well maintained, as 36% of respondents agreed and 41% disagreed. Most respondents (47%) agreed that children can easily participate in a diverse set of extracurricular activities. For most of the statements provided in this question, nearly one-quarter of respondents chose “not sure/no opinion”; this could indicate a cohort of respondents with no children in the public school system, or with children in private or home-based schooling environments.

Key Themes:

- **Public school education quality and facilities**
- **Optimism for higher education opportunities**

Takeaway: Responses regarding Martinsville’s education system are mixed. Community perceptions of Martinsville’s education system show optimism about long-term educational goals but concerns about present-day conditions. While many believe higher education is within reach, there is notable dissatisfaction with public school quality and facility maintenance.

Question 8

Would you agree or disagree with the following statements related to community facilities and services?

Summary: Most (73%) of respondents disagreed that “The City does a good job of informing all residents about available services and programs.” More than half (56%) disagreed that “There are sufficient social programs for youth and families in Martinsville.” Half of respondents (50%) agreed that “Parks and green spaces are readily accessible and well maintained.” While most respondents (65%) agreed with the statement “emergency services (fire, police) respond quickly when needed”, most respondents disagreed with “crime is not a problem in Martinsville” (69%) and “I am satisfied with healthcare options in Martinsville” (77%).

Key Themes:

- **Crime concerns**
- **Appreciation for high-quality emergency services**
- **Youth and family programs**
- **Information about City services and programs**

Takeaway: Most respondents feel the City needs to improve communication about services, expand social programs for youth and families, and enhance healthcare options. While the City’s emergency services (fire/EMS, police) are viewed positively, concerns about crime and limited healthcare options remain significant.

Question 9

Would you agree or disagree with the following statements related to infrastructure and sustainability?

Summary: About (40%) of respondents agreed that “the City has an opportunity to use more clean energy, such as solar panels and wind power,” while 24% disagreed and 36% were unsure or had no opinion. About one-third (34%) agreed that “Martinsville’s systems for managing floods and stormwater work well,” while 23% disagreed and 43% were unsure or had no opinion. Most respondents (89%) agreed with the statement, “I have high-speed internet at my home.” Opinions on waste and recycling programs were mixed, as 41% agreed they are effective and 31% disagreed, while another 28% were unsure or had no opinion. Only 19% agreed that “Martinsville is well-prepared to respond to natural disasters and severe weather events,” while 30% disagreed and most (51%) were unsure or had no opinion. The high percentage of “not sure or no opinion” responses to this set of statements suggest many residents may lack sufficient information or knowledge to fully assess the City’s environmental and emergency management systems.

Key Themes:

- **Clean-energy potential**
- **High-speed internet availability**
- **Preparedness and sustainability uncertainty**

Takeaway: Most respondents report reliable high-speed internet but show uncertainty or limited awareness about environmental infrastructure and disaster preparedness. This uncertainty, reflected in the high “not sure/no opinion” responses, indicates a need for better public education and communication on these topics. Support for expanding clean energy exists, but confidence in stormwater management and emergency readiness remains unsteady.

Question 10

What makes you proud to call the City of Martinsville home?

Summary: Many respondents take pride in the city’s natural beauty – including parks, trails (notably Dick and Willie Trail), and the City’s scenic surroundings. The small-town atmosphere, friendly community, and affordability also stand out as key sources of pride. Several mentioned community spirit, family connections, and cultural elements – like NASCAR and the City’s history and historic architecture.

However, a significant portion of respondents expressed frustration and disappointment, often citing dissatisfaction with City leadership and local governance, as well as economic struggles and a perceived decline in services and opportunities. Concerns about limited job opportunities, underfunded schools, and a lack of community resources were common. Some respondents feel disconnected or hesitant to identify with Martinsville due to ongoing political division, governance issues, and stagnation. Despite challenges, many residents are optimistic for Martinsville’s future, appreciating the community’s resilient and caring people and the unique potential for growth and improvement that the City has.

Question 11

What is one word you hope will describe the City of Martinsville twenty years from now?

Summary: The word cloud below was generated from the responses to this question. The larger the word, the more frequently it was entered as the “one word” respondents hope will describe the City of Martinsville twenty years from now.

Key Themes:

- *Thriving*
- *Growing/Growth*
- *Prosperous*



Question 12

Is there anything else you would like to share that would make the City of Martinsville a more livable and enjoyable place for you?

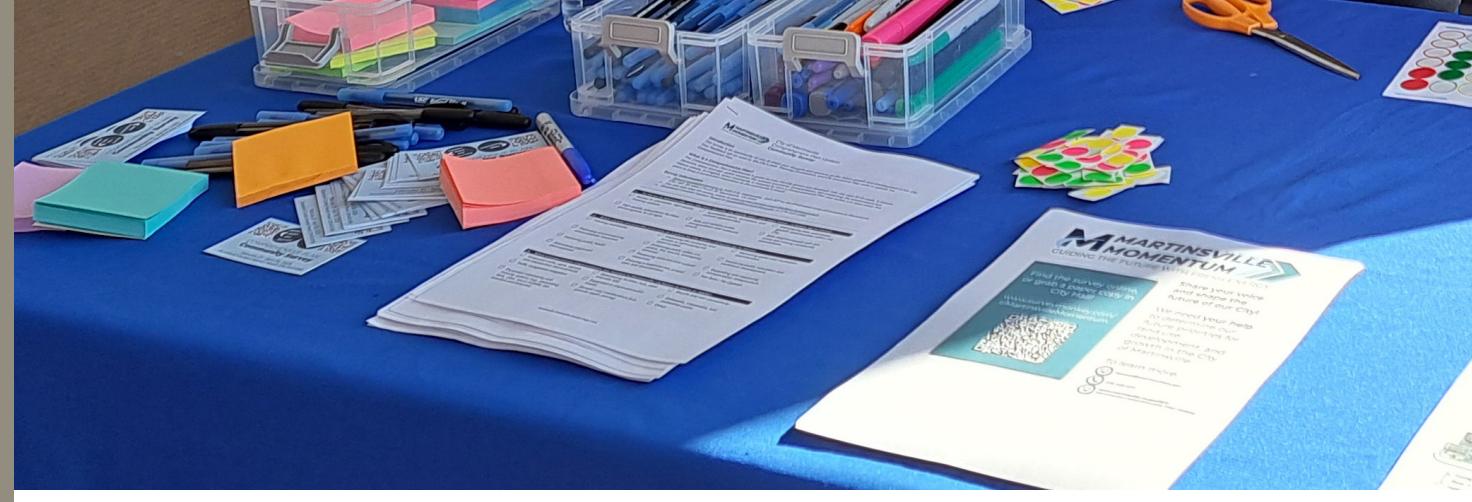
Summary: Many survey respondents expressed the need for professionalism, unity, and a shared vision among the City Council and administration. There is a strong sentiment that leaders should better prioritize the needs of the community – especially when it comes to significant topics such as infrastructure, economic development, and affordability. There was a general consensus among respondents that when leadership works together and focuses on community priorities, Martinsville is better positioned to grow and thrive.

Respondents called for better fiscal responsibility on behalf of City spending. Many argued that the current cost of living (including utilities, taxes, and housing) is increasingly unaffordable – particularly for retirees, low-income families, and residents on fixed incomes. Multiple comments suggested reducing utility rates, reevaluating the property tax hikes, and eliminating burdensome fees. Further, respondents shared a desire for greater transparency from City leadership. Respondents called for leadership that listens, lives within its means, invests in foundational services and economic vitality, and works collaboratively.

Economic opportunity was another major theme, with respondents calling for more stable job opportunities. Some noted that manufacturing and industrial jobs should be concentrated in Henry County; similarly, there were several responses that called Martinsville to focus on being a cultural and entertainment hub with thriving small businesses, restaurants, and events that draw foot traffic and tourism. Several respondents noted the lack of shopping and dining options, comparing Martinsville unfavorably to cities like Danville and Roanoke.

A significant number of comments expressed concern about the City's declining infrastructure and lack of attention to basic services. Power outages, deteriorating roads, and neglected parks were commonly mentioned. Respondents want the city to invest in long-term solutions – such as sidewalk improvements, water and power system upgrades, and revitalization of deteriorating buildings, especially Uptown.

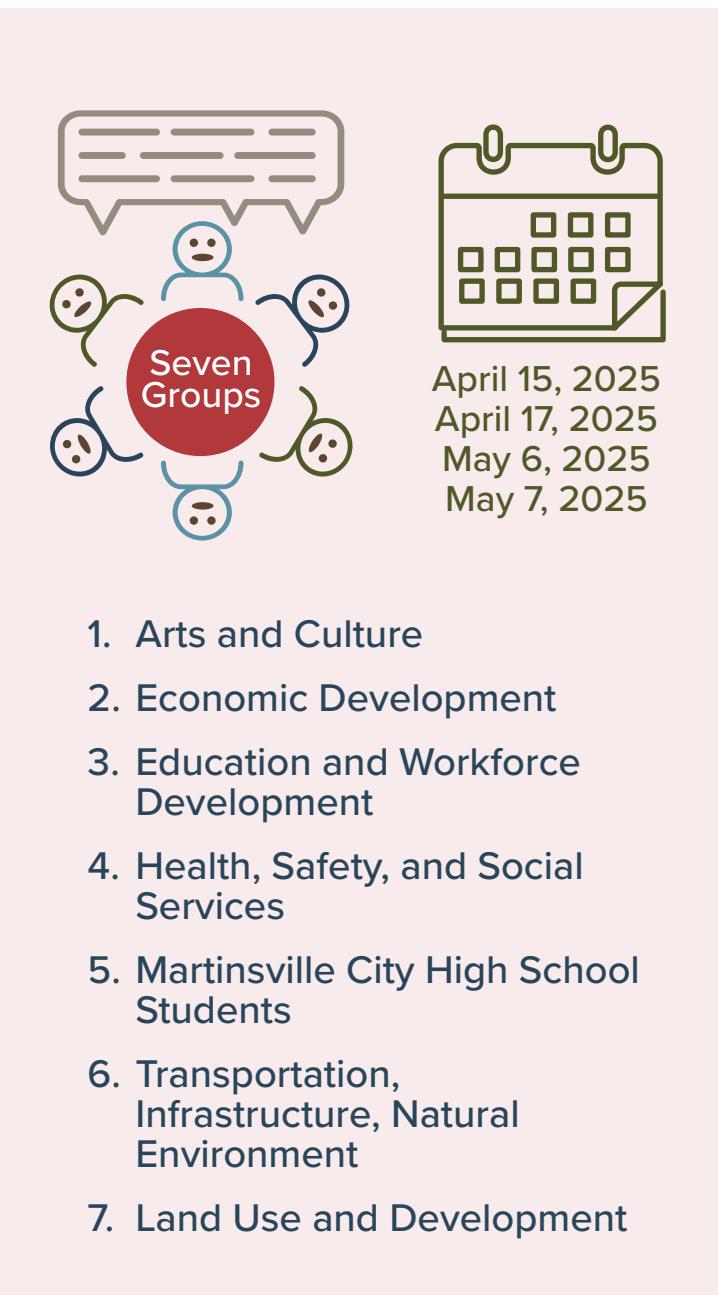
Public safety, education, and youth engagement also emerged as top concerns. Respondents voiced disappointment with the outdated school facilities and want more vocational training and extracurricular opportunities for kids. Several noted the need for accessible mental health and drug abuse programs, expanded transportation options like Uber or an expanded bus service, and year-round homeless shelters.



Overview

Focus groups were convened as part of the public input process for the Martinsville Momentum Comprehensive Plan. There were seven groups in total, taking place evenly over various online and in-person sessions. Each group was composed of stakeholders chosen by staff for their knowledge of the subject and for their roles within that area of focus in the community. Group size typically ranged from 5 to 12 individuals.

Each group was provided with a set of questions to consider prior to the meeting, during which the Berkley Group facilitator went over the questions and facilitated a discussion among group participants of different topics. The subsequent pages provide an overall summary of participant comments, along with a summary of the discussion for each group and key themes that emerged.



Summary

Focus group participants expressed a strong desire for coordinated and strategic growth across various sectors; there is a desire to collaboratively work together to improve overall quality of life across various sectors. There is a strong sense of community pride, optimism, and a willingness to collaborate, but current efforts are often fragmented and hampered by limited resources and insufficient communication. These issues are further compounded by inequities that affect youth, vulnerable populations, and marginalized communities. Across all focus groups, participants emphasized the importance of breaking down silos and creating stronger coordination between Martinsville, Henry County, regional institutions, and the community at large.

There is a call to preserve underrepresented histories, especially Black history, and to harness arts both for revitalization and growing City pride. However, current programs lack cohesion and centralized leadership. Economic development conversations revealed optimism around Martinsville's potential, citing its location, workforce, and entrepreneurial energy as strengths. However, bureaucracy, weak small business support, and a lack of strategic leadership were also noted as barriers to growth. In education and workforce development, existing programs like dual enrollment and certification initiatives are promising. However, better alignment with industry needs, improved soft skills training, and stronger communication between schools and employers are essential. Similarly, youth participants highlighted the need for accessible mental health services, safe and welcoming public spaces, and more practical career training opportunities – or better communication of what programs and certifications are available. Many expressed a desire to return to Martinsville after college, but hope to see job opportunities, housing variety, and quality of life improve.

Health, safety, and social services discussions praised local law enforcement and fire/EMS but emphasized the need for more robust, long-term solutions to address mental health, substance abuse, housing insecurity, and gaps in maternal care. Participants called for new shelters, expanded recovery programs, and full-time services for underserved groups. Finally, in transportation and the natural environment, Martinsville's trail system, natural beauty, and low traffic were seen as strengths, but residents want to see expanded pedestrian and bike infrastructure, improved park maintenance, and updated codes to support green spaces and sustainability.

Overall, focus group participants were eager for proactive planning, with a focus on equity, accessibility, and cross-sector collaboration. There is a sense that Martinsville has momentum, but realizing its full potential will require sustained investment, clear leadership, and a shared vision that unites its people and institutions around a shared vision.

Focus Group 1

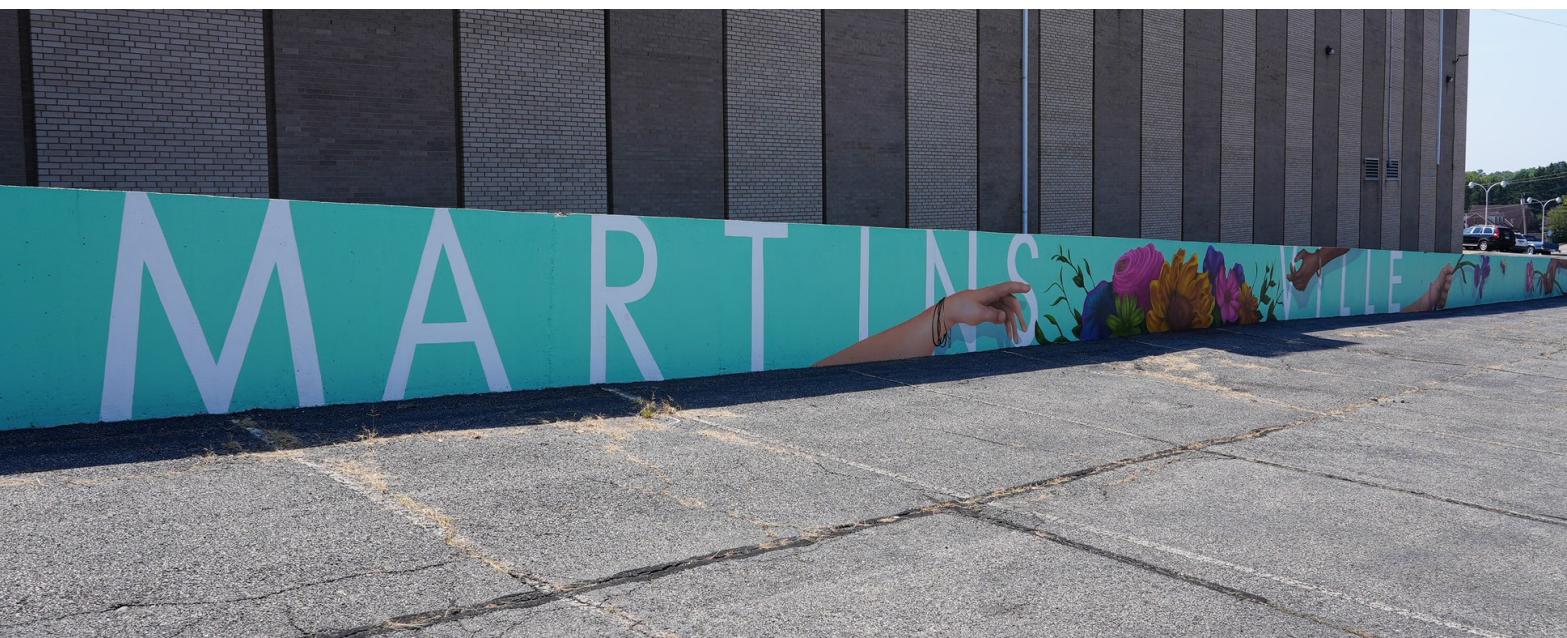
Arts and Culture

Summary: Participants highlighted the need to preserve underrepresented histories – particularly local Black history – and emphasized that arts and culture play a critical role in revitalization, community pride, and enhancing quality of life. While several arts initiatives exist in the City, they are fragmented and lack a central coordinating body or strategy. The City needs a more unified approach to marketing, programming, and downtown management, as well as stronger collaboration among organizations, the City, and regional partners. The participants stressed the importance of breaking down resistance to change in order to realize Martinsville's full potential. They emphasized the need for coordinated planning, roundtables, and regional partnerships between the City and Henry County, as well as other external partners.

Participants identified several pressing challenges, including limited health care access (especially maternal and pediatric), a lack of diverse food options, and weak local engagement with cultural assets. Opportunities include the development of a cultural marketing plan, expanded public art (e.g., murals), creative community events, and leveraging tourism through improved signage, pop-up promotions, maps, and other wayfinding tools. There is a strong desire to shift from reactive complaint-based input to proactive idea generation and outreach, including using non-digital methods to reach broader audiences.

Key Themes:

- *Develop a comprehensive cultural marketing strategy*
- *Invest in placemaking to celebrate local identity*
- *Strengthen regional partnerships*
- *Continue development of plans such as the Fayette Street Corridor Plan*



Focus Group 2

Economic Development

Summary: Martinsville is a strong location for business investment due to its low cost of living, skilled workforce, and access to educational resources like New College Institute (NCI) and Patrick & Henry Community College. The city has available land and buildings, and a growing momentum with motivated entrepreneurs.

A shared vision and strategic leadership were seen as critical to moving forward. Major obstacles to economic growth include bureaucratic resistance, lack of a centralized economic development entity specific to the City (i.e., an IDA or Economic Development Department), insufficient incentives for small businesses, and the need for improved permitting processes and support. Participants expressed frustration with poor communication, siloed efforts, and missed opportunities due to inaction, particularly around infrastructure such as the needed waterline extension on Commonwealth Boulevard. Despite the challenges, there is an optimism that Martinsville is a regional retail and commercial hub, with hopes for more collaboration, investment in property, a business incubator, and stronger public-private partnerships.

Key Themes:

- *Focus on strategic redevelopment and revitalization*
- *Curate professional economic development leadership*
- *Forge public-private partnerships*
- *Commit to infrastructure improvements and other investment to drive growth*
- *Need to work together on a shared vision*



Focus Group 3 **Education and Workforce Development**

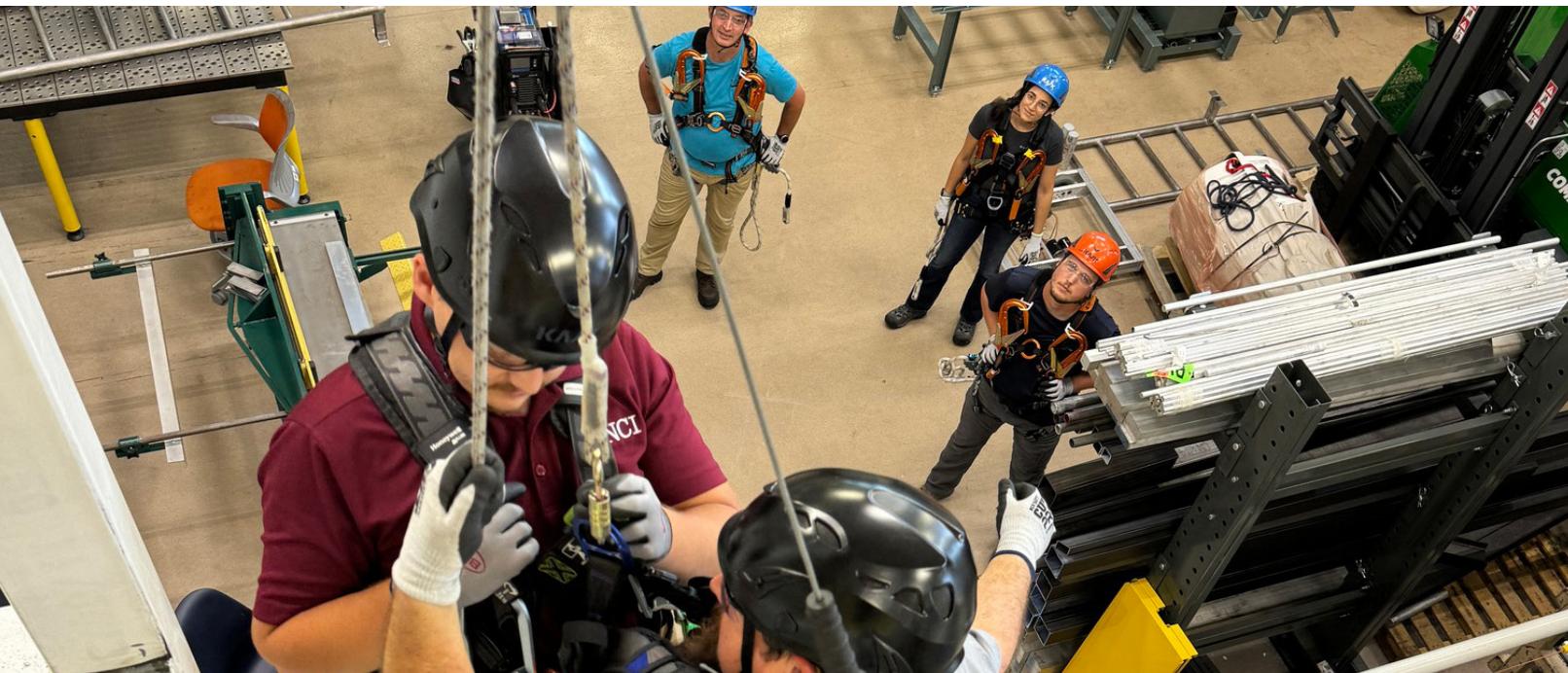
Summary: Education and workforce development assets include a small school division, strong dual enrollment programs, financial support, and specialized training opportunities through Patrick & Henry Community College certifications. Martinsville benefits from a supportive community with great quality of life and diversity. The City benefits from emerging initiatives, such as a “Young Professionals” group which promotes the City’s assets and what it has to offer younger generations.

However, challenges such as budget cuts, a trade skills gap, and poor coordination between schools and training programs limit progress. There should be more effort in the early identification of students for fast-track training opportunities and improved communication by the City school system and Patrick & Henry to identify good candidates for trades training and career trajectories.

To better prepare students for workforce needs, Martinsville should foster regular collaboration between economic development, education, and business sectors. The community also needs to address issues like distrust, lack of awareness, and duplicated efforts between Martinsville and Henry County. Combining school systems, enhancing soft skills training, expanding childcare options for working families, and promoting success stories could improve engagement and outcomes. Importantly, solutions should be realistic and tailored to Martinsville’s size, focusing on practical improvements rather than overly complex initiatives.

Key Themes:

- **School-to-workforce connections**
- **Optimize resources**
- **Soft skills and career readiness**
- **Communication and awareness of education opportunities**



Focus Group 4 **Health, Safety, and Social Services**

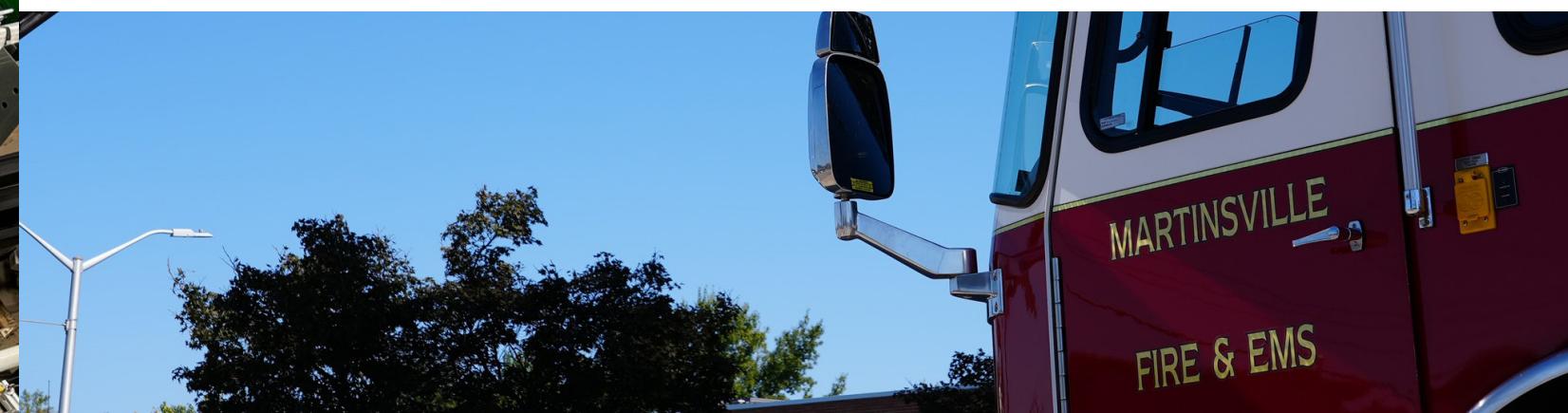
Summary: Martinsville has highly regarded public safety personnel (especially local law enforcement and the sheriff’s office) and also has the advantage of having both paid and volunteer fire/EMS teams that work well together. The community is close-knit and there is a strong desire for collaboration among health and safety providers/entities. However, despite strong efforts, the City (both Martinsville staff, as well as regional partners) struggles with limited resources in terms of personnel, time, and funding. Public safety and sheriff office both face challenges due to high turnover, particularly due to individuals leaving for higher paying jobs. The City could benefit from a dedicated grant writer to collaborate with various departments to seek and secure funding.

Substance abuse is a major cross-cutting issue linked to crime, housing instability, and health problems. Vulnerable groups – including individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and those struggling with addiction – often fall through the cracks due to a lack of affordable housing, accessible services, and supportive programs. Mental health services are limited, particularly for young people. Barriers such as cost, insurance, stigma, and community resistance (NIMBYism) hinder the development of treatment and housing solutions. There are no programs specifically for pregnant mothers with substance use issues, and labor and delivery services have recently ended at the local hospital. Jail overcrowding and limited re-entry programs highlight the need for preventative and peer-supported services before crises occur.

A significant gap exists in sustained mental health support. Martinsville currently addresses mental health mostly through short-term, outpatient programs, with limited follow-up and few long-term resources. Some current local providers are even avoided due to delays and limited effectiveness for severe cases. There is a strong need for a full-time, year-round shelter that offers meals and serves all populations, including those with disabilities, as well as additional support facilities for women’s recovery.

Key Themes:

- **Holistic, long-term solutions**
- **Underserved and vulnerable populations**
- **Mental health support and services**
- **Resource constraints**
- **Local collaboration**



Focus Group 5 **Martinsville City School Students**

Summary: Participants indicated that significant challenges for their peers include feeling isolated and the lack of a safe, welcoming space(s) to gather. Concerns include a high suicide rate, limited housing options post-graduation, and the lack of accessible mental health resources. Participants expressed a strong desire for a dedicated building for mental health support and community resources, as well as more inclusive public spaces not tied to the city or commercial interests. They also emphasized the need for better communication around events and more consistent maintenance of public facilities.

In terms of education and the future, participants want more hands-on learning opportunities like trade programs, internships, and pathways to careers in fields such as healthcare, cosmetology, engineering, performing arts, and real estate. Many are interested in returning to Martinsville after college but stress the need for better job availability, community infrastructure, and more housing variety. Ideas for city improvement included expanding family-focused recreational options such as trampoline parks and skating rinks, revitalizing abandoned buildings for public use (e.g., food halls, art spaces), and increasing kid-friendly amenities. There was also a call for a stronger local identity through the arts, festivals, and accessible small business spaces, including incubators.

Participants also indicated a lack of clear and accessible communication from the City. Many young people feel disconnected from available resources, events, and opportunities simply because they don't know they exist. They noted poor promotion of event offerings, limited use of platforms that youth engage with (i.e. Instagram and TikTok), and a need for better information sharing through schools, community boards, and centralized communication channels.

Key Themes:

- **Mental health and youth support**
- **Educational and career training opportunities**
- **Housing variety to address all incomes**
- **Importance of “third-spaces”**
- **Communication about events, opportunities, and services**



Focus Group 6 **Transportation, Infrastructure, and Natural Environment**

Summary: Martinsville has a strong foundation of outdoor amenities, including the Dick and Willie Trail and an abundance of nature accessible within and around city limits. Low traffic volumes, interconnected streets, and excess roadway capacity – particularly on Spruce Street – support walkability and biking, especially in uptown areas. Efforts like the new Tree Board, Bee City designation, and accessible trails highlight a community that values outdoor activity and environmental assets. However, there is a call to expand trails, improve park maintenance, and enhance the curb appeal and safety of public spaces. Participants also stated that while Martinsville has a variety of park and recreation spaces, residents prefer going to County parks.

Key infrastructure improvements include fixing obstructed and limited sidewalks, particularly outside of Uptown and along Church and Fayette Streets, addressing poor visibility at intersections, and improving pedestrian and bike connectivity – especially near major roads and landmarks like Kroger and the YMCA. Parks need modernization, especially Baldwin Park and the aging playground near West Church Street. Additionally, there is a need for improved code enforcement or regulation for green infrastructure (tree canopy requirements, parking lot islands, etc.).

Key Themes:

- **Enhancement and protection of natural resources**
- **Tree canopy and urban heat island effects**
- **Modern City ordinances**
- **Park and recreation spaces**
- **Pedestrian and bike infrastructure and connectivity with trails**



Focus Group 7

Land Use and Development

Summary: Participants emphasized that Martinsville's current development patterns are focused on redevelopment and adaptive reuse, rather than new construction. This is applicable to both residential and non-residential development and was stated to be due to rising costs, a limited supply of vacant land, and a lack of infrastructure in developable areas. Participants also expressed a strong need for diverse, affordable housing options – namely high-quality rental units, modular homes, and upper-floor residential with activated street-level uses. Updates to the City's Zoning Ordinance were stated as a critical need, particularly to allow greater flexibility for "missing middle" housing – such as duplexes, triplexes, and townhouses – and to provide clarity on enforcement.

There was broad agreement that Martinsville should also focus on attracting non-residential uses and amenities that entice young families and remote workers to spend their money within the City, rather than traveling to Charlotte, Raleigh, or Greensboro for entertainment. Participants also underscored the importance of community cohesion, youth mentorship, and capturing the economic and social value from Martinsville's unique characteristics, while remaining mindful of gentrification and the lingering effects of historic displacement of Black families. There was broad agreement that Martinsville should leverage its natural assets, such as tree canopy and green space, and build an identity around outdoor recreation and quality of life to attract young professionals and families.

Key Themes:

- **Redevelopment and infill over new development**
- **Affordable housing options**
- **Flexibility and clarity in zoning regulations**
- **Environmental benefits of redevelopments**



Who Participated?

- Ameristaff
- Architectural Review Board (ARB)
- Arts & Cultural Committee
- Berry Elliott Realtors
- Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)
- Carter Bank
- Community Advisory Board
- Economic Development Authority (EDA)
- Fayette Area Historical Initiative (FAHI)
- Martinsville Fire & Emergency Medical Services
- Green Infrastructure Center (GIC)
- Martinsville Chamber of Commerce
- Martinsville Commonwealth's Attorney Office
- Martinsville High School Students
- Martinsville Sheriff's Office
- Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
- Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society
- New College Institute (NCI)
- Patrick & Henry Community College (PHCC)
- Patrick Henry Elementary School
- Planning Commission
- Small Business Owners
- Studio 107
- The Harvest Foundation
- The Lester Group
- Uptown Partnership
- Virginia Department of Health (VDH)
- Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition
- Virginia Museum of Natural History
- West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC)
- YMCA

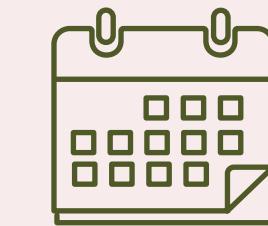


Overview

Four drop-in events were conducted on February 22nd, March 5th, April 15th, and May 6th at various locations throughout Martinsville. The events were held as unique opportunities to share general feedback on various planning-related topics.



- The Ground Floor
- Martinsville Middle School
- YMCA
- New College Institute



February 22, 2025
March 5, 2025
April 15, 2025
May 6, 2025

Drop-In: Morning Coffee @ The Ground Floor

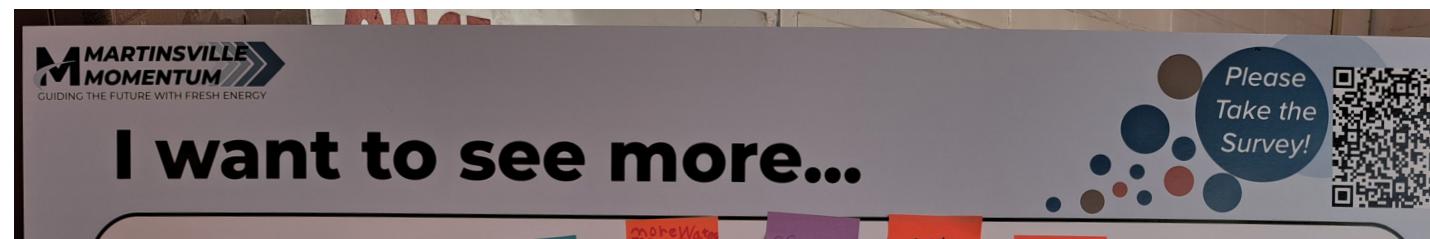
Activity: SWOT Analysis Board; Economic Priorities

Summary: This informal drop-in event was held at the Ground Floor coffee shop in Uptown Martinsville during the morning of May 13, 2025. City staff and Berkley Group representatives were available to discuss the Comprehensive Plan update with patrons and share information about the survey and drop-in events; patrons could also share their perspectives on the SWOT analysis and economic priorities board.

Results for the SWOT analysis and economic priorities board are cumulative for this drop-in and the drop-in at New College Institute; see pages 30 through 32.



Drop-In Recreation Basketball at Martinsville Middle School



Activity: I want to see more _____ in Martinsville.

Summary: This drop-in event was held at the Martinsville Middle School during recreation basketball. Many of the participants were youth, which provided an opportunity for Martinsville's youngest residents to provide feedback on the City's future. Participants in this activity expressed a desire for more family-friendly amenities – including parks, water parks, and child-focused activities. As with other methods of public engagement, there was a call for better paying jobs and more affordable housing options. Participants also want additional options for affordable daycare, after-school programs, and education for children with disabilities.

Key Themes:

- Family-friendly activities
- Youth engagement
- Job opportunities
- Affordable housing

Answers:

- More family activities
- More community gatherings
- More for kids to do as family
- More jobs
- Event center (small, medium, large in one)
- Technology
- Zoo
- Water park
- More jobs
- More parks
- Higher paying jobs
- Cheaper rent
- Better education for kids with disabilities
- More water parks
- Better jobs
- Better homes
- Better law enforcement
- Cheap home
- Dining places like IHOP and such for my family
- More affordable daycare
- More child friendly places/activities
- More jobs
- More housing
- More public parties for good kids
- More after school programs
- More city giveaways (like stuffed backpacks for school supplies)



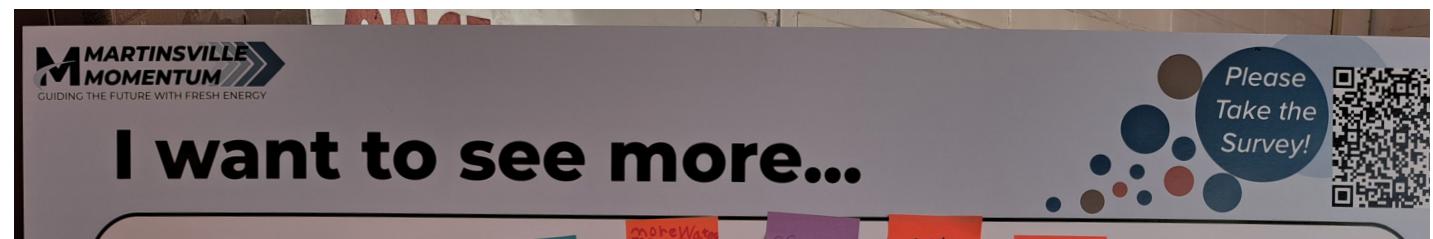
Activity: What are your top 3 priorities for Martinsville's future?

Summary: Participants identified their top priorities for Martinsville's future by placing dot stickers on a large board. One dot sticker = one vote. The top three priorities were: a variety of housing options that I can afford, access to a stable mix of living wage jobs, and more options for entertainment, dining, and shopping. The lowest priorities were being able to walk to amenities, road maintenance, and continuing education.

Key Themes:

- Expand dining, shopping, and entertainment options
- More housing options
- Living wages





Activity: I want to see more _____ in Martinsville.

Summary: Participants expressed a desire for Martinsville to offer more family-oriented and recreational activities for all ages. There is a desire for improved expanded public transportation, support for small businesses, revitalizing downtown, and encouraging a wider variety of restaurants and commercial development that leverages the city's natural resources and history. Additional priorities included affordable housing, accessible childcare, mental health resources, and better education.

Key Themes:

- *Activities for all ages*
- *Public transportation*
- *Revitalization*
- *Natural resources and recreation*

Answers:

- More family activities
- Safe streets and public transportation
- Interactive community programs
- Historical information posted on properties
- Utilize more of the natural resources and history in the criteria for new restaurants, commercial, and retail
- People to quit living in the past
- Focus on better education, affordable housing, and cultural experiences
- Small business support
- Capitalizing natural resources for activities
- Revitalization of downtown
- Variety of businesses
- Affordable housing
- Private schools
- Public transportation, like Uber and taxis
- More recreational activities for adults and seniors



Activity: What are your top 3 priorities for Martinsville's future?

Place one dot sticker beneath each of your top three priorities.

Key Themes:

- *Expand dining, shopping, and entertainment options*
- *Living wages*
- *High-quality education*

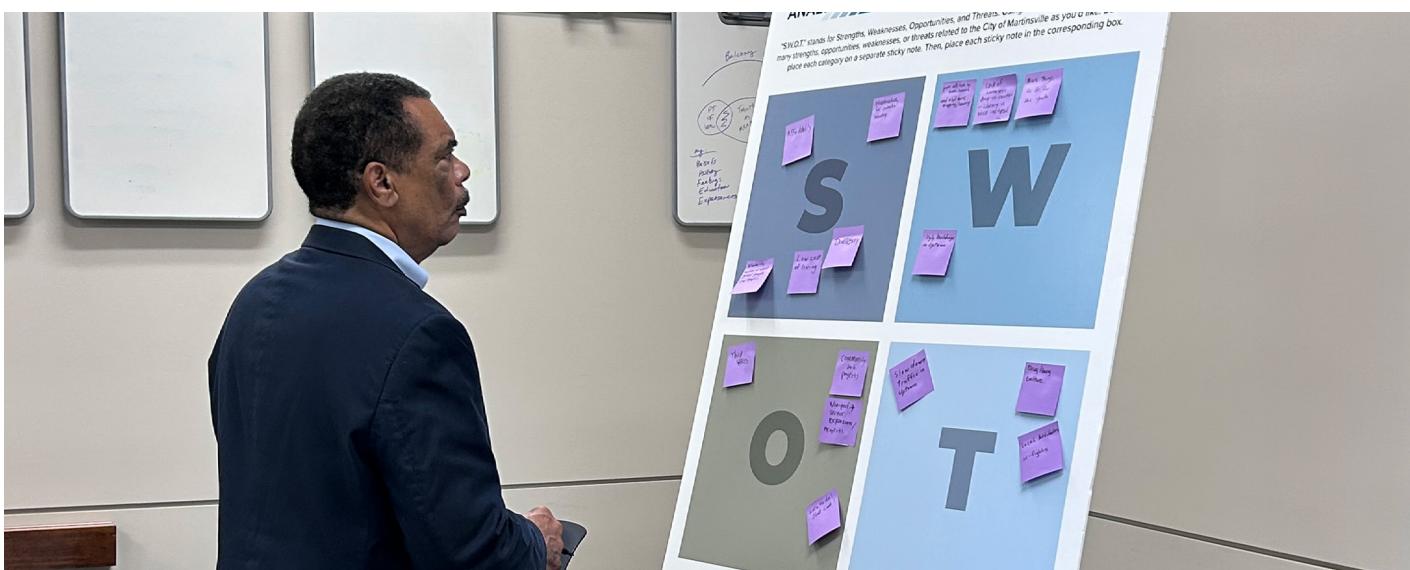


Activity: SWOT Analysis Board

Summary: This activity asked participants to write down what they perceive to be strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the City of Martinsville. Participants felt that Martinsville's strengths include low cost of living, small-town charm and diversity. Participants felt that Martinsville's weaknesses include lack of services for vulnerable groups, transportation issues, and run-down buildings and areas that need revitalization. Participants felt that Martinsville's opportunities include expanding community spaces, increasing funding, and strengthening partnerships. Participants felt that Martinsville's threats include political conflict, crime, negative attitudes, lack of transparency, and issues with law enforcement and courts.

Key Themes:

- **Build on Martinsville's affordability and small-town charm. Promote the city's low cost of living, natural surroundings, and strong sense of community to attract residents and investment.**
- **Invest in housing and infrastructure. Address aging infrastructure and expand affordable, quality housing options to support current residents and future growth.**
- **Support vulnerable populations. Improve transportation options, expand services for low-income residents, and provide dedicated facilities for people experiencing homelessness.**
- **Foster community identity and engagement. Promote public art, expand third spaces, and invest in cultural and historical projects that reflect Martinsville's character and bring people together.**
- **Improve transparency and communication. Strengthen trust between citizens and city leadership by enhancing public communication and accountability.**
- **Revitalize Uptown and key commercial areas. Focus on cleaning up neglected properties, improving aesthetics, and supporting small businesses.**



STRENGTHS

- Affordability (mentioned three times)
- Diversity (mentioned twice)
- Low cost of living (mentioned twice)
- Small town
- "Slow" lifestyle
- Infrastructure for potential industry
- Nature all around
- Great people
- Low traffic

OPPORTUNITIES

- Third spaces
- Increase funding for "outside agencies"
- Community art projects
- Non-profit sector expansion/projects
- Increasing partnerships
- Housing
- Rebuild Rives Theater; NOT an amphitheater
- Merge school systems
- Lots to do! Just look!

WEAKNESSES

- Poor attitude by some locals
- Need a bit more shopping/housing
- Lack of homeless drop-in center – library is used instead
- More things to do for the youth
- Housing
- Infrastructure neglect for decades
- Customer service
- Affordable housing options
- Repairs & upgrades for library property
- Ugly buildings in Uptown
- Veteran support
- Transportation for low income people
- Poor communication with citizens and City leadership
- Unsightly old unused buildings and houses
- Transportation

THREATS

- Slow down traffic in Uptown
- City Council drama
- Drug/gang culture
- Local attitudes
- In-fighting
- Lack of transparency with City leadership
- Community culture
- Food deserts
- Crime
- Lack of accountability in courts
- Revolving door – in-police, out-courts

Activity: Economic Priorities

Summary: Participants identified their top economic priorities for Martinsville by placing dot stickers on a large board. One dot sticker = one vote. The top three priorities were small and local businesses, skilled trades, and education. The lowest priorities include offices and warehousing.

Key Themes:

- **Support and small and local businesses.** Participants strongly favored local entrepreneurship as a top driver of economic development.
- **Invest in skilled trades and workforce education.** There is clear interest in expanding vocational training and educational opportunities to meet local employment needs.
- **Less interest in traditional office-based industries.** Office jobs and warehousing were the lowest priorities, suggesting a shift away from these as focal points for economic growth.

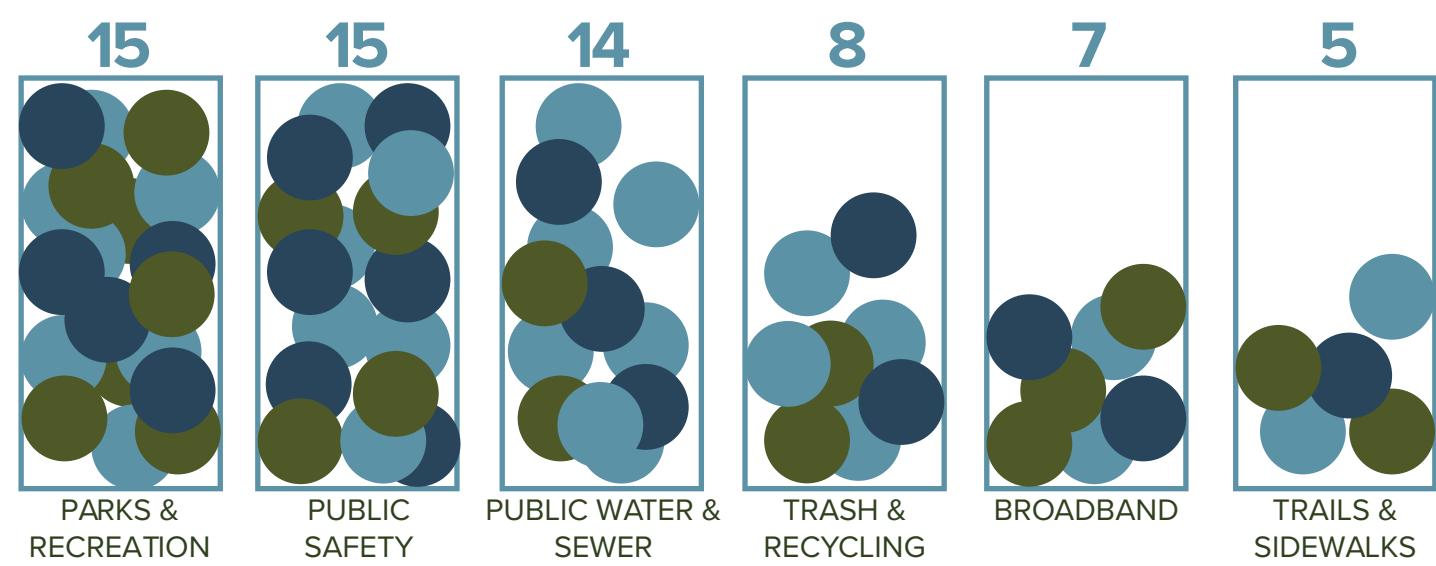


Activity: City Budgeting Game

Summary: This activity had participants allocate limited funds to different public improvements, by using a series of jars labeled to various items. Each participant put their “money” in the jars to represent their priorities for investment in infrastructure. The top three priorities for infrastructure investment were public safety, parks and recreation, and public water and sewer.

Key Themes:

- **Prioritize investment in public safety and recreation, as important components to quality of life and community well-being.**
- **Maintain and upgrade essential infrastructure.**



Activity: Transportation Priorities

Summary: Participants identified their top transportation priorities for Martinsville by placing dot stickers on a large board. Each sticker color represented a needed improvement. See the included map, which is a diagrammatic representation of the results. The highest priorities were general road maintenance and congestion/traffic flow – specifically along Mulberry Road, south of Spruce Street.

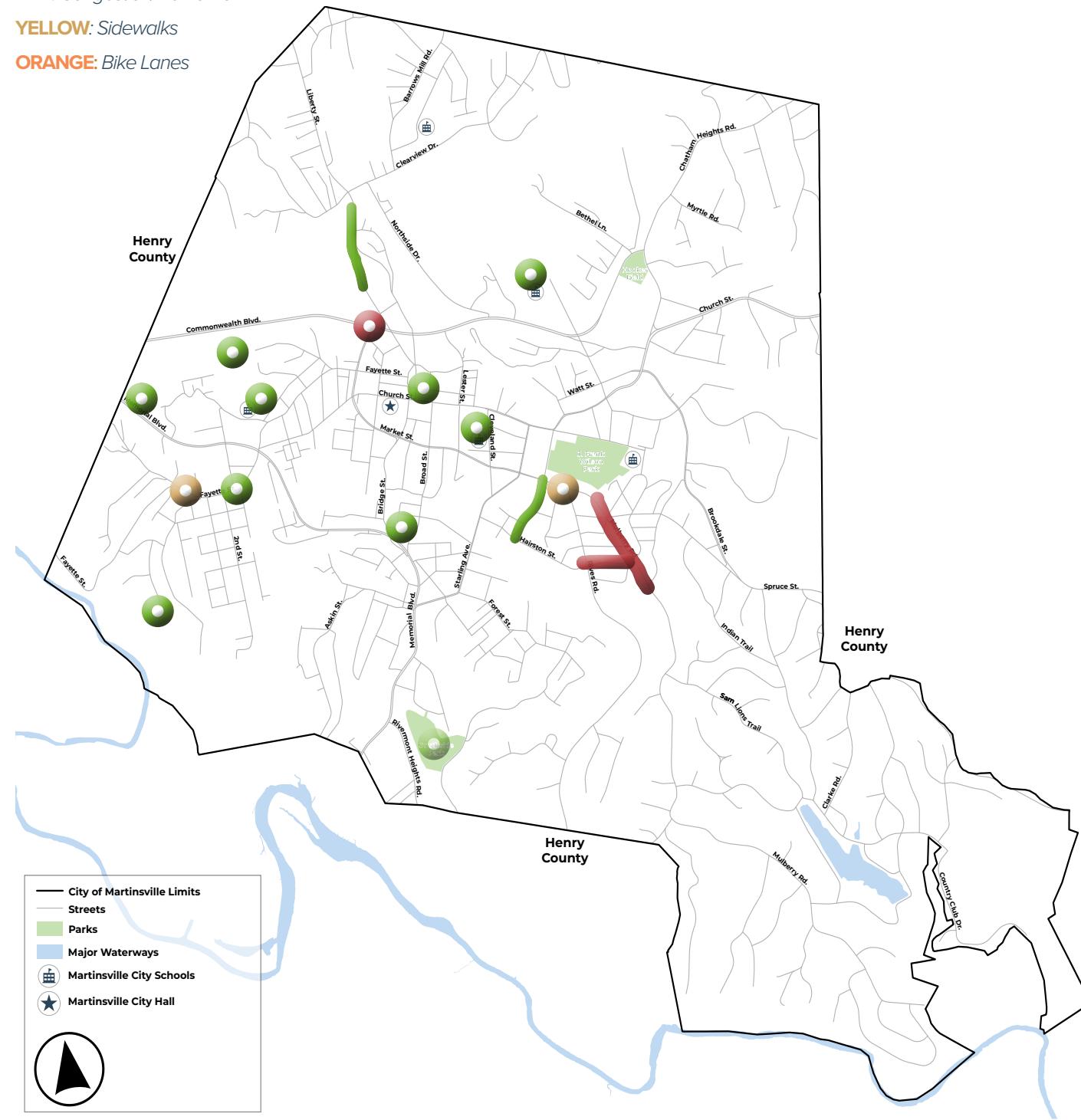
BLUE: Safety Improvement

GREEN: General Maintenance

RED: Congestion/Traffic Flow

YELLOW: Sidewalks

ORANGE: Bike Lanes



Activity: Future Land Use

Summary: Participants identified where they feel various types of future development would be most appropriate by placing dot stickers on a large board. Each sticker color represented a type of generalized land use. See the included map, a diagrammatic representation of the results, demonstrating multiple votes with larger icons. The results represented, largely, the existing land use pattern of Martinsville. This likely indicates the community is generally happy with the current development patterns and wants to preserve and improve, not dramatically change, how land is used. Results showed a call for more mixed-use development, particularly within the uptown area.

BLUE: Mixed-Use

GREEN: Open/Green Space

RED: Commercial

YELLOW: Residential

PURPLE: Industrial

PINK: No new development

