

# memorandum

**DATE:** June 12, 2020

**TO:** Susan Steck, Community Development Director

**FROM:** Jill Bahm, Meghan Cuneo, and Matt Wojciechowski, Giffels Webster

**SUBJECT:** Master Plan Virtual Open House Results

---

The City of Lathrup Village launched the Master Plan Virtual Open House on May 11<sup>th</sup> and it was available through May 25<sup>th</sup>. The Virtual Open House was promoted via the city's website, social media posts and a press release. The open house was available to the public for two weeks. Included on the open house site was information about demographics, housing, transportation, and commercial corridors as well as opportunities for members of the community to submit feedback on specific topics. Participants were asked to share their thoughts on transportation and mobility, their neighborhood, three different redevelopment sites, and their general thoughts on the city and Master Plan process.

During the two-week period, the Lathrup Village Virtual Open House site received 324 views and averaged approximately 28 responses per question. There was a total of 156 participants across all seven feedback opportunities. The following is a summary of the findings from the virtual open house:

## Thoughts on Lathrup Village

The first question asked, **"What one or two words best describe Lathrup Village?"** In total, 17 participants submitted feedback. Below is the word cloud generated by their responses. Words that appear larger in the cloud indicate an answer submitted multiple times.

Respondents identified Lathrup Village with a variety of words but most common was "community." Overall the feedback was positive, and participants focused on the friendliness of the city, infrastructure concerns, and the charm.



## Transportation and Mobility

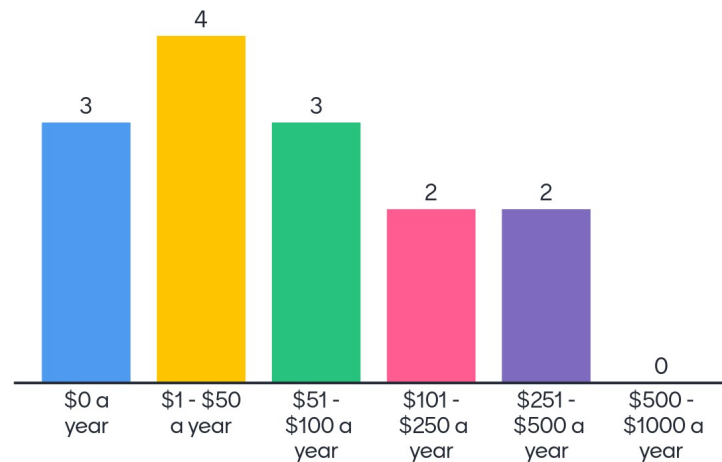
Participants were then asked to consider mobility improvements for the city. The question was, “**What enhancements would you make to improve mobility, including transit, walkability and cycling in the city?**” In total, 21 people submitted feedback on this prompt.



Respondents offered a wide variety of suggestions. The most common enhancement requested was the addition of bike lanes on Southfield Road. There was a significant focus on safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and automobiles too. Sidewalk improvements were a popular answer; participants suggested expanded the sidewalk network, increasing connectivity, widening sidewalks, and fixing the overall quality of the pathways in the city. Finally, the input revealed that drainage along roadways and sidewalks was a high priority to improve mobility. Additional open-ended recommendations included the following:

- *Improve sidewalk repair. When repair directives are issued to homeowners regarding sidewalk deficiencies, include “opt-up” options allowing residents to elect additional assessment for correction of sidewalk design issues.*
- *Eliminate chronic and persistent flooding of sidewalks*
- *Require that drainage improvements associated with ditch and street repair include provision for creating swale connections*
- *Eliminate sidewalk gaps*
- *Make grocery and restaurant access available on a walkable basis in all four quadrants*
- *Make pedestrian crossings safer on Southfield through mini-boulevards and traffic calming pinch points at intersections on an interval of approximately every three blocks.*
- *Make access to I-696 or Southfield Rd less dangerous during busy hours.*
- *Work with regional authorities to enhance rapid public transportation connections along Southfield Rd. to major Detroit destinations, thereby enhancing the value of existing apartments on Southfield as well as our detached housing for people who wish to be more independent of automotive transportation.*

Participants were also asked to consider measure their willingness to contribute to mobility improvements in Lathrup Village. The question asked, **“How much would you be willing to spend annually to improve walkability and cycling access in Lathrup Village?”**. In total, 14 people responded to this question. 50% of participants said they would be willing to spend between \$1-\$100 annually to make these improvements.



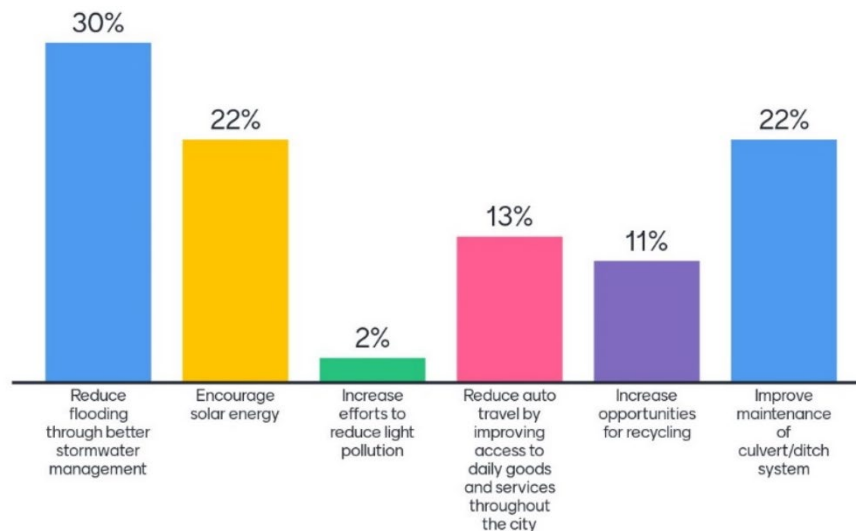
## Neighborhoods

The next question required participants to select the neighborhood where they live within the city. In total, 20 participants responded to the prompt. Most of the respondents indicated they lived in the neighborhoods north of I-696. The Northeast and Upper Northwest neighborhoods had the most residents submit feedback and represented 65% of the total responses. On this question, only 1 participant was from the Southeast neighborhood and only 1 participant was from the Southwest neighborhood.



## Sustainability and Resiliency

Next, participants responded to questions about tactics for promoting sustainability and resiliency in Lathrup Village. The first question asked, **“Which of the following areas would you like to see the city focus on to improve sustainability?”** and required respondents to select their priorities from six pre-generated options. In total, 18 people responded to this question. The most pressing issue for residents was to “Reduce flooding through better stormwater management” with 30% of the vote. Encouraging solar energy and improving the maintenance of culvert/ditch systems were tied as the second most voted focus for the city.



This section of the open house also allowed participants to submit their own ideas for improving sustainability and resiliency in Lathrup Village. The first open-ended question asked residents, **“What other sustainability efforts would you like to see implemented?”**. Of the 12 total responses, 41% expressed interest in landscaping and tree planting as a primary effort for improving sustainability. More robust and sustainable storm water management was also a common answer provided by participants. Below are some comments submitted by respondents:

- *“Tree planting on all houses between sidewalk and road to develop a mature tree canopy.”*
- *“Rainwater collection system for lawns and parks.”*
- *“Equalize property taxes for new and old homeowners so the burden of sustainability initiatives is not very disproportionately carried by newer residents.”*
- *“More green infrastructure, more dense housing.”*
- *“Build faith in the future of the City through consistent code enforcement and persistent, sustained improvements to infrastructure.”*
- *“Convert the liability of outmoded ditch-based drainage system into an asset. Through improvements and enhancements to our system such as underdrains, swales, and rain gardens, our system when fully functioning can be marketed as a design for a responsible, nature-friendly ecological design for the future.”*
- *“Reduce housing costs by requiring that all homes going through turnover of ownership and all rental properties meet R-61 standards in the insulation of attic floors or other pertinent energy standards.”*

- *“Reduce home-ownership and housing costs by providing inducements for solar power installations.”*

Lathrup Village should implement efforts to become more prepared for future weather disasters, economic crisis, or health concerns. The current COVID-19 pandemic reaffirms the city’s focus on resiliency. Participants were asked, **“How should the city be planning for the next natural disaster or health crisis?”**. This was an open-ended question that received 11 responses. Many participants indicated the need for an emergency response plan, disaster recovery plan, or financial reserves for emergencies. Below is some of the feedback this question received:

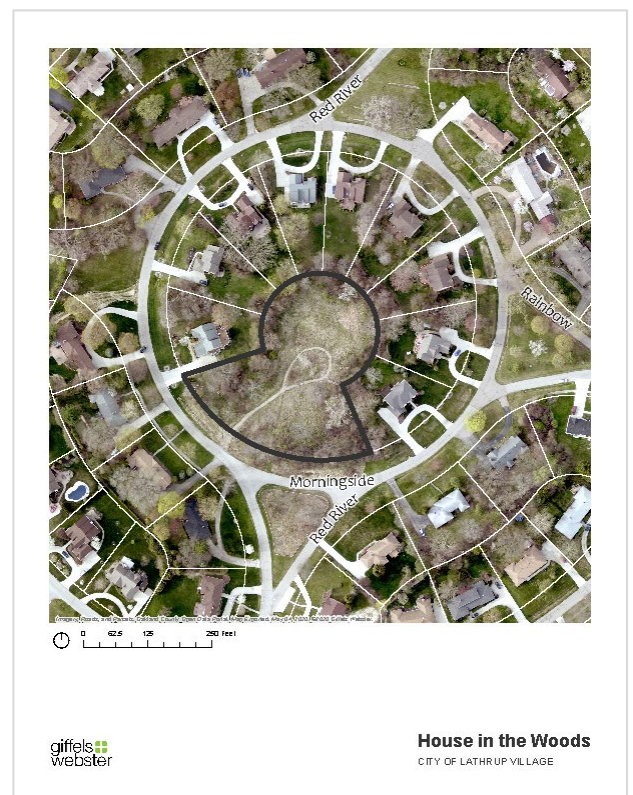
- *“Response team for emergency planning and getting information out to the residents so they know what resources are available during a crisis.”*
- *“Develop a disaster recovery plan and present to residents annually.”*
- *“Ensure adequate police fire medical staff are readily available to support LV in a timely manner.”*
- *“To keep a financial reserve for disasters. Appoint a leader to purchase supplies for distribution to the community at the onslaught of a disaster. Items should be predetermined in order that they be secured immediately upon notice of such disaster.”*
- *“Build a fund to provide loans to struggling families and businesses. Improve communications to households without internet technology.”*

## Redevelopment Sites

### House in the Woods Site

Participants were asked what they would like to see on the site. In total, 19 people provided their feedback on redevelopment. Respondents suggested a new dog park or green space, new homes, picnic areas, and enhanced community amenities on the site. Below are some of the participant comments:

- *“Keep as green zone but improve it with walking trail and gardens, trees etc. or have a dog park in there with all the amenities i.e. fenced area, benches, trash cans, gate to enter. To use pay a modest year fee.”*
- *“Park w/barbecue pit, gazebo and playscape to mirror city hall. Would be great for another concert and family event space.”*
- *“Community gardens, a nature preserve, or a dog park. Or just build three or four houses there.”*
- *“A park. There’s no need to develop every single square inch. Let it be a park with maybe some exercise equipment.”*

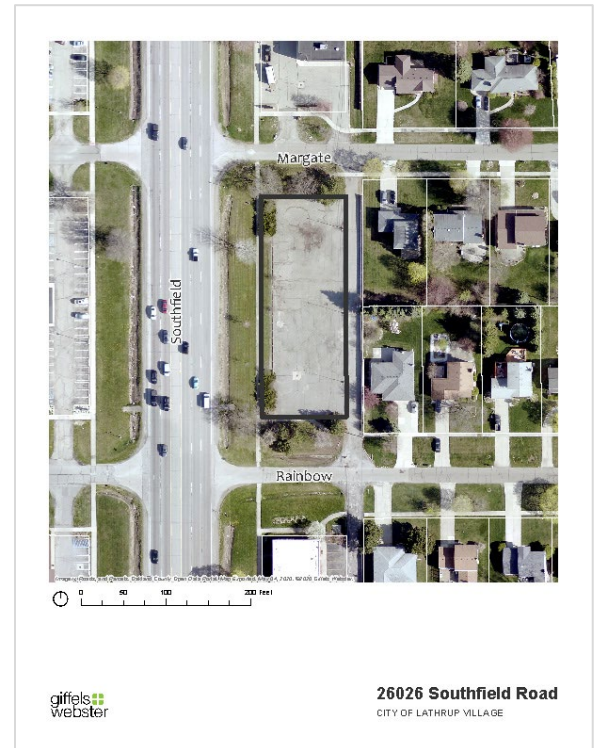




## 26026 Southfield Road Redevelopment Site

Participants were asked what they would like to see on the site. In total, 13 people provided their feedback on redevelopment. Participants had many different ideas for the site, but some common feedback was to create space for new restaurants or groceries, community park or sports facilities, and multi-family condominiums or apartments. Below are some of the participant comments:

- *"A place where residents could walk to for groceries, restaurants, ice cream, bakery, etc. We don't need more cell phone, hair or clothes stores!"*
- *"Specialty Market selling fresh produce, meats etc. along with floral."*
- *"Multi-level condos, or better-looking office buildings."*
- *"A city sports facility such as a fitness center with extended hours or an ice rink or an open gym. Or a community activity center or rentable meeting space or rentable hall."*



## Annie Lathrup School Redevelopment Site

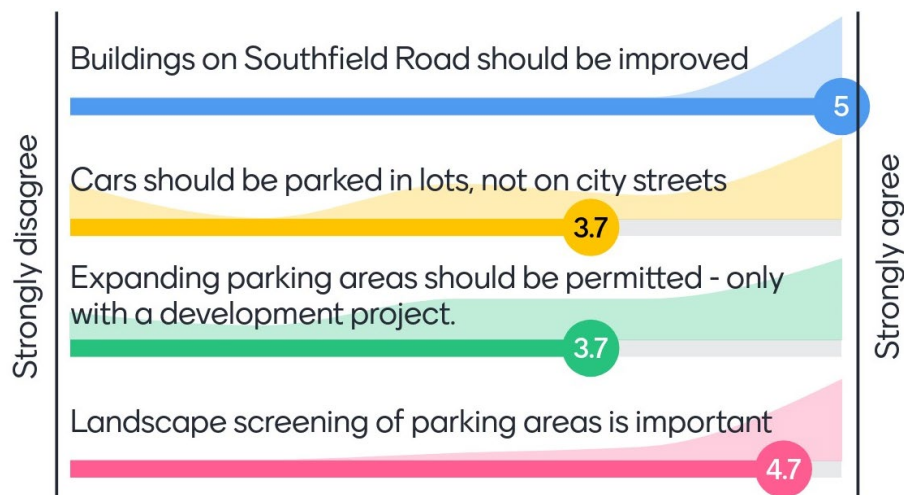
Participants were asked what they would like to see on the site. In total, 12 people provided their feedback on redevelopment. Some common recommendations were to implement mixed use development with housing and local retail, a community center, and food vendor spaces. Below are some of the participant comments:

- *"Historical property could be converted to condo housing."*
- *"Refurbished it to various small stores so residents can walk to it to purchase items or refurbish to office space. Keeping front face of building."*
- *"City Community Complex: ice arena, open gym, fitness center, putting and batting practice areas, pool, meeting rooms, banquet rooms, professional kitchen, city museum, small auditorium with stage. Or, senior Housing with courtyard, garden, paths."*
- *"Senior living, mixed use condos and retail, or several businesses such as higher end retail, medical, office spaces, etc."*



## Southfield Road On-Site Parking

In addition to the three development sites, participants were also asked to consider the reconfiguration of on-site parking for new businesses along Southfield Road. This virtual open house section provided a concept sketch to help respondents visualize the challenges on Southfield Road and the potential solutions. In total, 15 people submitted their feedback. Participants were asked, **“What do you think about redevelopment and parking?”** and instructed to rank the importance of four redevelopment principles. Improving the building quality along Southfield Road gained the most consensus amongst the categories; all respondents strongly agreed that improving the building was important. Landscape screening was also a highly agreed upon component of the Southfield Road redevelopment. In general, all of the options were mostly agreed upon.



## Additional Feedback

The final opportunity for public feedback was linked to a map of the city. Participants were able to select a place on the map and leave a corresponding comment about that location. In total, 16 people left additional feedback in this section of the open house. Below are some of the participant comments:

- *“Rather than trying to come up with new projects for the city to implement, we should **first focus on the existing issues that can be addressed through code enforcement** and/or beautification incentives for Southfield Road businesses.”*
- *“Convert the liability of outmoded ditch-based drainage system into an asset through **underdrains, swales, and rain gardens** creating ecologically responsible features.”*
- *“I think the **dirt roads should stay and be maintained by the city**. It would be great to see a style/color that identifies Lathrup and gives it a standout presence. Perhaps through art.”*
- *“The city is very “clicky” the same people seem to be showing up everywhere. It makes other residents feel less welcome. The **city should make an effort for different people to be involved**.”*
- *“Through zoning or other tools, **create environments for walkable destinations** in each sector that bring people together, e.g., restaurants, coffee shops, small grocers”.*
- *“**Create strategic volunteer engagement around tree planting** and creating related green development projects that utilize the City’s abundant berm land to enhance the City’s status as a*

*leader in response to climate change.”*

- *“Enhance walkability through traffic calming, sidewalk repair and drainage improvement.”*
- *“Assist residents in making their homes more affordable through insulation with volunteer technical support and work project teams for seniors and families with children.”*
- *“Promote resident engagement on reporting to City regarding trees that need pruning. Establish three-month response windows for action by City on tree complaints.”*

On the following map, are some of the location-based comments left by participants. Many responses contained valuable insights and recommendations. Much of what was indicated on the map is mirrored by feedback from other questions in the survey. In addition to the web-based comments, the city received one emailed response; this feedback has been included in the overall summary.

“Area behind Panera Bakery (Separating parking lot from side street to the rear) is a perfect example of poor landscape design. The planting should go the entire length of the lot. My fear future developments will not adequately be landscaped therefore being an eye sore for residents whose property faces the development.”

“Blight on Southfield Road should be addressed as a priority. Contractors need to be held accountable for poor or unfinished work. Currently there are many places with trees and bushes, standing water, parked cars, construction debris, and uneven or damaged sidewalk sections that can make it difficult to walk the neighborhoods. The infrastructure improvements millage proposed last year was not equitable to newer residents that have recently uncapped assessed values due to the problems caused by the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A.”

“When it comes to redevelopment of the business district along Southfield, take a page out of Ferndale’s playbook. Particularly what they did around 9 Mile and Woodward. This area sees more traffic, but is more conducive to walking around.”

“We’ve been here 20 years - and were involved in some of the first strategy plans / road studies. It \*feels\* as if we revisit this every few years but do not seem to be able to implement the plans. I’d love to see improvement on Southfield road - most of that corridor is an eyesore. It surprises me often that Lathrup is not more desirable - there is so much going for it!”

“Create cross hatch painting and signage for all lanes of west-bound service drive to avoid blocking the intersection to Lathrup Blvd. traffic during traffic signal backups.”

Southfield corridor could be improved greatly by utilizing the parking behind the building and keeps the front entirely for greenscape. One side of businesses (front or back) should be for foot traffic only, the other side should be for vehicular traffic. It is not safe to walk to any business because pedestrian safety is entirely dependent on drivers seeing and yielding to walkers and bikers.

