



CARMEL'S NEXT GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

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CARMEL'S NEXT GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD



- Redevelopment of an 80-acre site east of U.S. 31 (former CNO campus)
- A Master Plan will guide housing, retail, office, entertainment, and public space
- Three nationally recognized design firms submitted concept ideas as starting points

Carmel's Next Great Neighborhood project centers on reimagining an 80-acre site—including the former CNO Financial Group campus and Carmel is reimagining an 80-acre site east of U.S. 31, anchored by the former CNO Financial campus.

This redevelopment will be guided by a Master Plan, which will set the long-term vision for housing, retail, office, entertainment, and public amenities.

To kick off the process, the City invited three nationally recognized design firms to share concept ideas of what the neighborhood could become.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



**NINETEEN
ELEVEN**

- City prioritized input from the start
- Feedback will guide design team choice and Master Plan priorities
- Partnered with NineteenEleven to ensure meaningful participation

While a selection committee will ultimately choose the design firm to draft the Master Plan, the City made it a priority to invite public input from the very beginning. Feedback gathered at this stage will inform the committee's decision and help shape the plan's priorities.

In doing so, the City partnered with NineteenEleven Consulting to design and facilitate the engagement, ensuring residents had meaningful opportunities to participate early on.

ENGAGEMENT METHODS



Community Survey

Short questionnaire capturing resident priorities, values, and preferences



Design Idea Boards

Concept boards from three design firms, plus a blank slate board where residents could share their own original ideas

To make participation accessible, the project team offered two ways for residents to provide input through an online engagement portal: a community survey and design idea boards.

The community survey gathered feedback on resident priorities, values, and preferences.

The design boards included a series of concept boards created by three design firms, along with a blank slate board where residents could share their own original ideas.

People were encouraged to take part in one or both, ensuring everyone could engage at the level that worked best for them.

Together, these two methods provided a complete and nuanced picture of community feedback.

ENGAGEMENT TOTALS

405
Participants



4144
Responses



757
Comments



174
Subscribers



The public portal opened August 4 and closed August 11. In those eight days, the two engagement methods provided a statistically valid sample, with a total of 405 participants contributing 4,144 responses and 757 comments.

174 individuals subscribed to email updates about Carmel's Next Great Neighborhood project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 Housing variety is a priority, with interest in single-family, “missing middle,” and senior-friendly options that fit Carmel’s character.
- 2 Green space and sustainability are highly valued, especially preserving trees, creating gathering areas, and showcasing environmental design.
- 3 Walkability within the area is important, with emphasis on pedestrian areas and trail connections that link the district to surrounding areas.
- 4 Mobility options should be multimodal, balancing cars and parking with alternatives like biking, shuttles, and regional transit.
- 5 Community spaces are important, though views differ on whether they should focus on resident uses or support tourism.

Community feedback from both the survey and idea boards paints a picture of what residents hope to see in the district. While perspectives varied, several priorities consistently emerged.

Housing variety is a priority. Many participants voiced interest in expanding options beyond traditional single-family homes. Comments pointed to a mix that could include “missing middle” housing types, apartments or condos in the right context, and senior-friendly designs such as ranch homes or assisted living communities. The common thread was a desire for housing that both broadens Carmel’s choices and still reflects the city’s established character.

Green space and sustainability are highly valued. Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of protecting mature trees and avoiding the “disappearing green space” seen in other parts of Carmel. Ideas included everything from gardens, recreation courts, and event lawns to sustainable building design and energy features. The tone of the comments reflected a strong desire for nature and sustainability to be more than symbolic — they want it to be functional, intentional, and central to the site’s identity.

Walkability is a strong desire. A recurring theme was the call for safe, comfortable, and inviting pedestrian spaces. Residents want to move easily within the district without needing a car, supported by shaded walkways, accessible paths, and clear separation from vehicles. Trail connections that link the site to the Monon Trail and to other parts of Carmel were also frequently highlighted.

Mobility options should be multimodal. While cars and parking were acknowledged as necessary,

they were not the only focus. Many participants suggested alternatives to driving, such as golf carts, small shuttles or trolleys, or even rail or bus transit for regional connections. The comments showed support for designing a place where multiple transportation options coexist, reducing congestion while improving access.

Community spaces are important. There was broad interest in gathering places for events, recreation, and activities for all ages — from daycare and youth programming to senior centers and continuing care facilities. At the same time, respondents debated whether these spaces should prioritize resident-focused uses, such as local classes and meeting rooms, or tourism-oriented uses, like a convention center or hotel.



Community Survey Results

The community survey was designed as a primarily quantitative tool to measure resident preferences for the neighborhood.

SURVEY TOPICS

Use & Character



Potential Tradeoffs



Open-Ended
Comments



Survey questions focused on the desired use and character of the area, including how people envisioned public spaces, the look and feel of the neighborhood, and the activities they would most likely use there. The survey also explored potential tradeoffs in design features, such as balancing building height with open space or weighing priorities for different modes of transportation.

In addition to these structured questions, the survey included one open-ended prompt that allowed respondents to share additional comments. These narrative responses offered residents the opportunity to highlight specific ideas, concerns, or priorities in their own words.

ENGAGEMENT TOTALS

362
Participants



4021
Responses



494
Comments

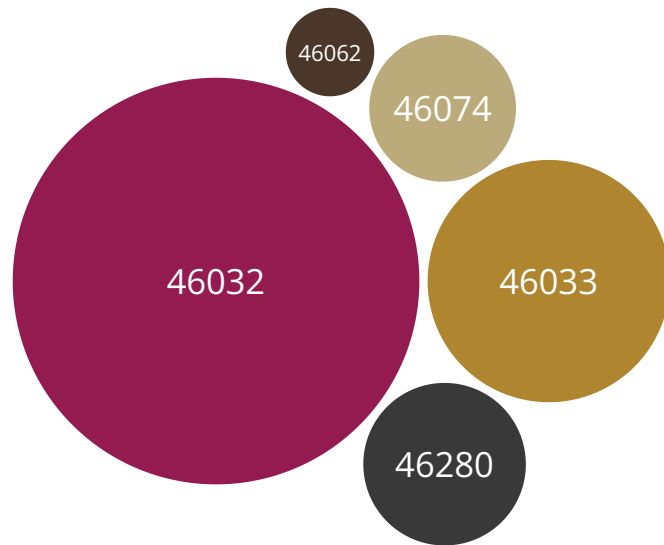


142
Subscribers



The community survey received feedback from 362 participants, resulting in 4,021 responses and 494 comments.

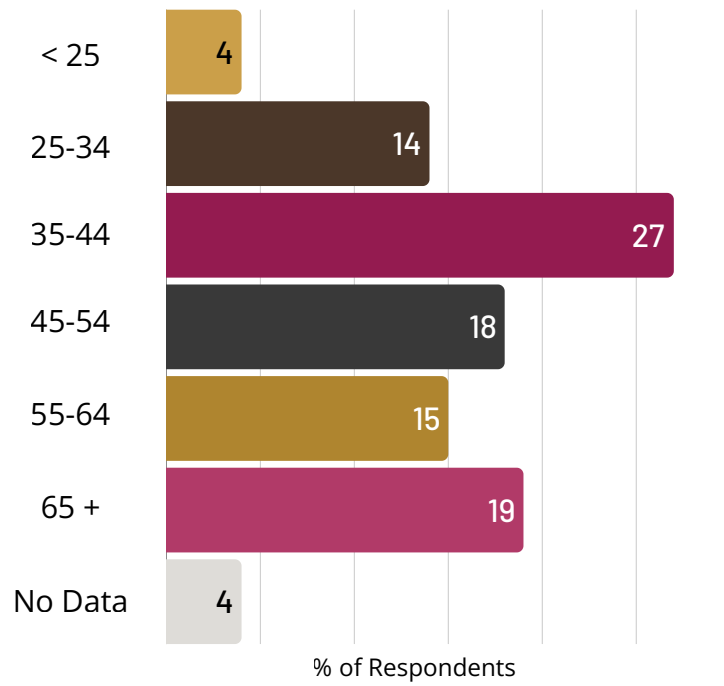
ZIP CODES



Survey participants were primarily residents of Carmel, with the largest share coming from zip code 46032 (n=169), which accounted for just over half of all responses. The next most common zip codes were 46033 (n=60) and 46280 (27).

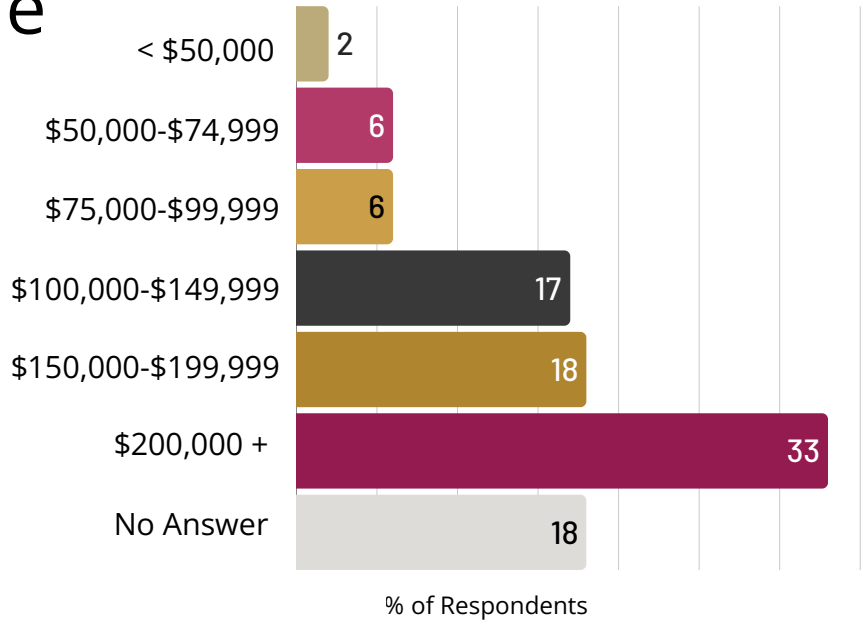
DEMOGRAPHICS

Age



Respondents represented a wide range of age groups. The largest share fell in the 35–44 range (27%), followed by respondents aged 65 and older (19%) and those aged between 45 and 54 (18%).

Income



Participants disproportionately reported annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more (68%), with one-third (33%) having incomes of \$200,000 per year or more. Fewer participants represented annual household income levels below \$100,000 (14%).

USE & CHARACTER

- 1 Respondents want a multi-use area with space to gather.
- 2 They envision interacting with the area through parks, trails, shopping, dining, and attending events.
- 3 Green space and shade are top priorities as public space amenities.
- 4 There is a preference for a natural, connected, family-friendly feel in the area's design.

The survey results highlight several broad themes in how respondents would like to see the neighborhood take shape.

Overall, participants expressed a desire for the area to serve multiple purposes with opportunities to gather and connect.

Looking ahead, they envisioned engaging with the neighborhood through parks and trails, shopping and dining, and attending community events.

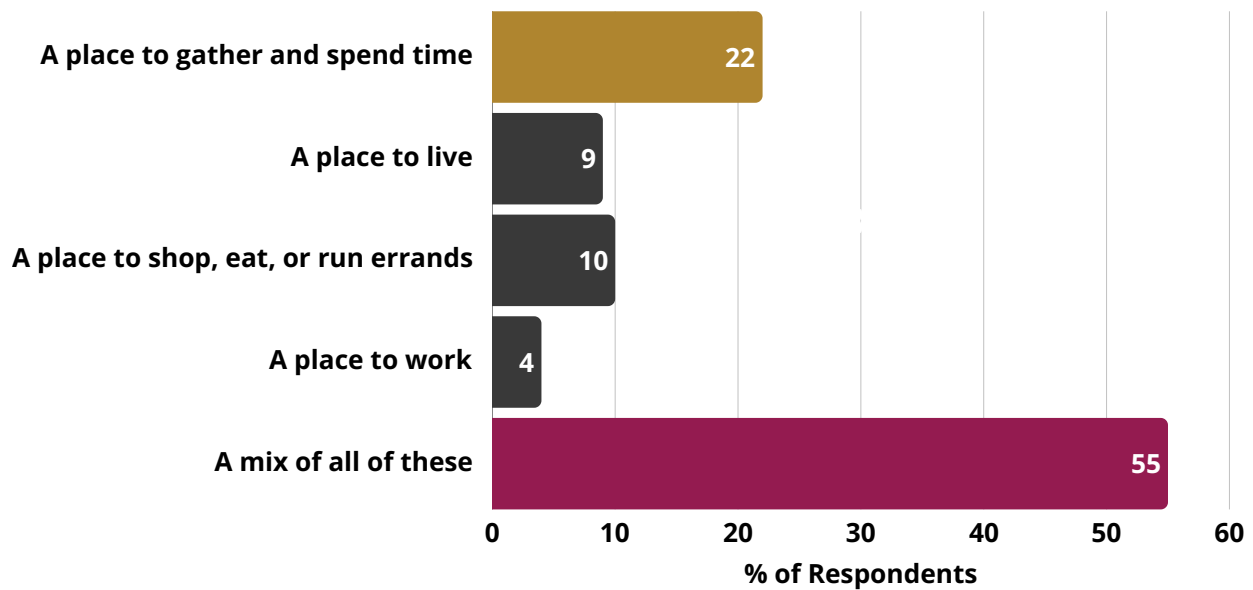
In terms of public spaces, green space and shade consistently emerged as top priorities, often mentioned alongside other amenities.

Respondents also favored a design that feels natural, connected, and family-friendly.

These findings provide an overview of community preferences for the neighborhood's use and character.

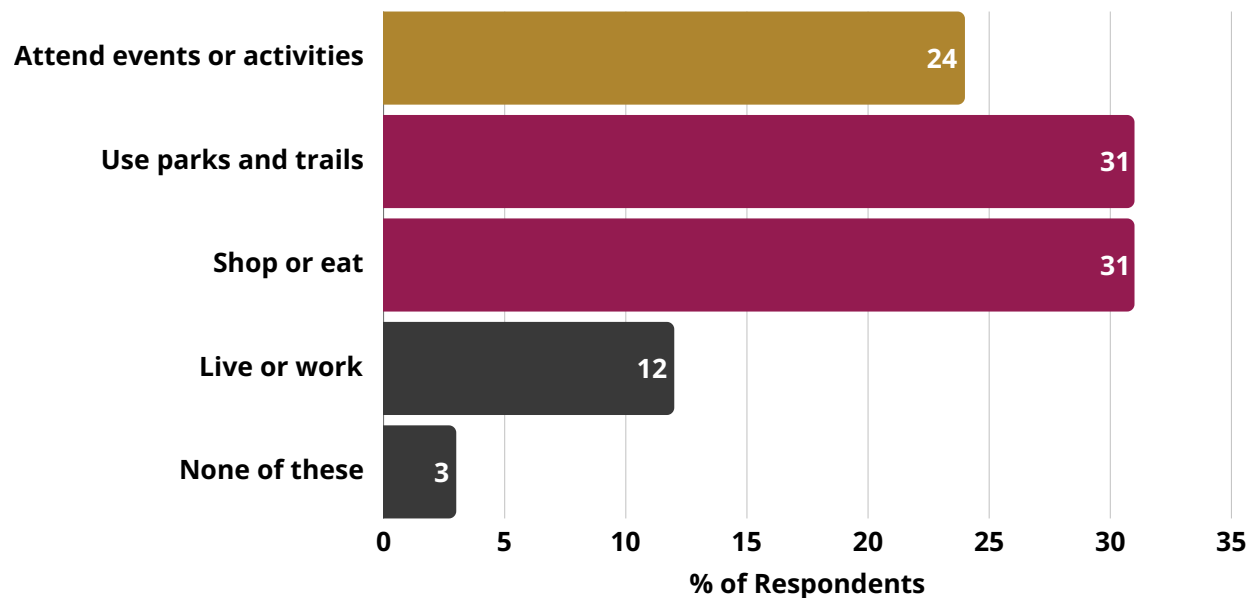
The following sections present the results of each individual survey question in greater detail.

What should be the main purpose of this area?



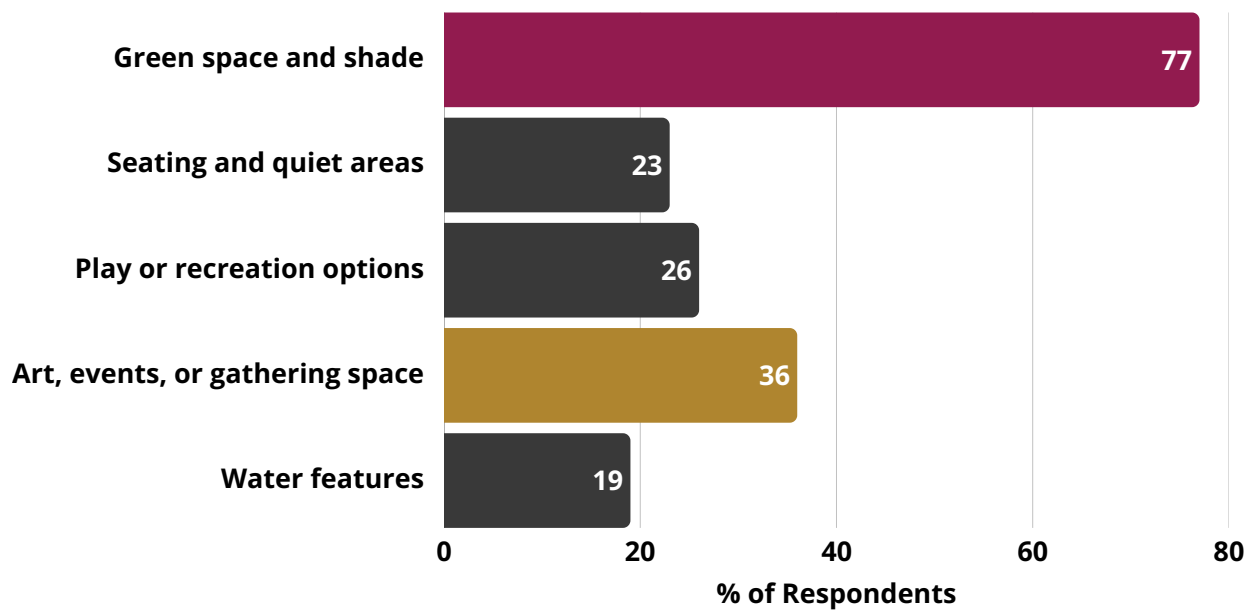
When asked about the main purpose of the area, a majority of respondents selected a mix, including a place to gather, live, work, shop, dine, and run errands (55%). Of the individual choices, a place to gather and spend time (22%) scored highest.

***If you were to use this area in the future,
what would you most likely do there?***



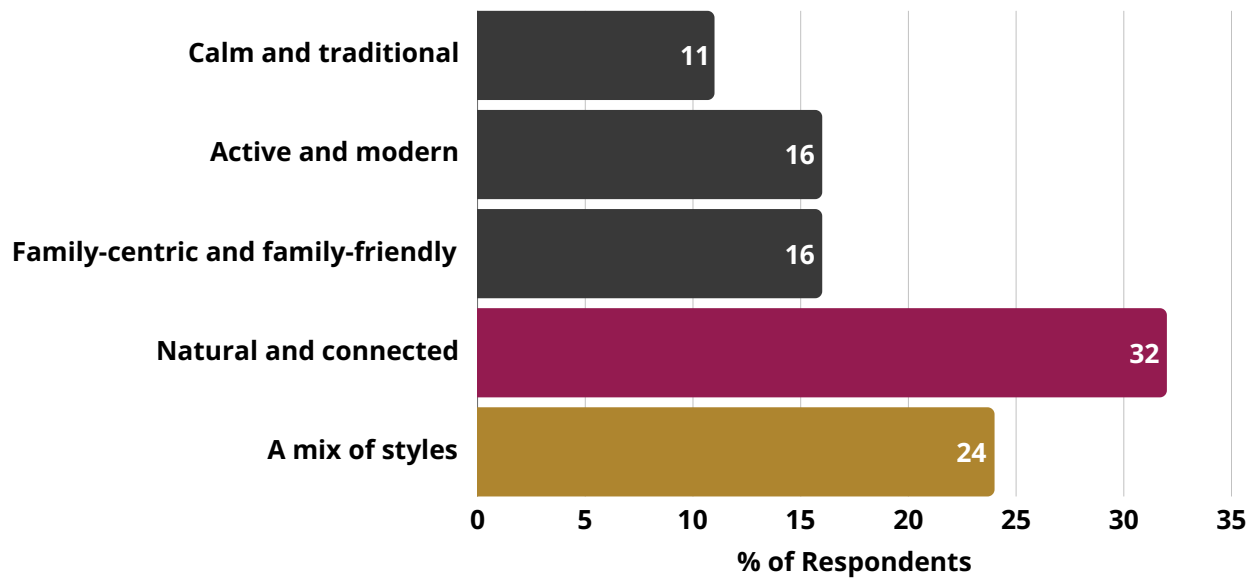
Respondents most often envisioned themselves using parks and trails (31%), shopping or dining (31%), and attending events or activities (24%) in the neighborhood.

What's most important for public spaces here?



When asked about public spaces, people consistently pointed to green space and shade as the most important element in the area's design (77%).

What should the design of this area feel like?



The single most common choice for design feel was natural and connected (32%), though many preferred that this be mixed with other styles (24%).

TRADEOFFS

- 1 Desire for a flexible mix of quiet and lively settings for the overall feel.
- 2 Support for balanced design, with a preference for amenities and green space over height restrictions.
- 3 Most want familiar Carmel character with some new elements.
- 4 They prioritized walking and biking within the area over easy car access and parking.
- 5 They want multi-modal access to the area, with slight priority given to driving and parking.

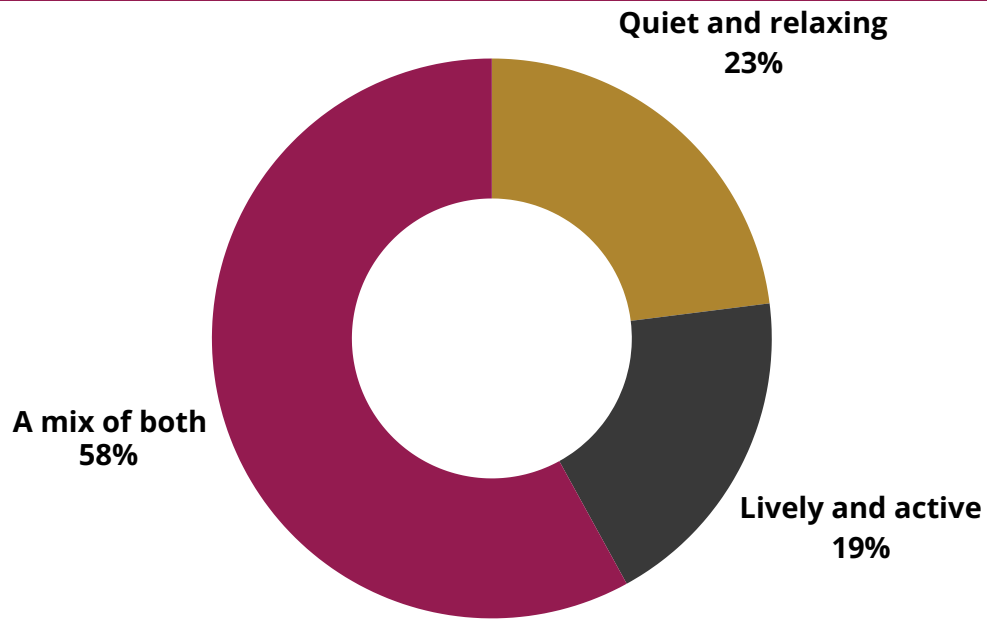
Several survey questions asked respondents to consider design tradeoffs and priorities for the neighborhood.

Overall, participants favored a flexible mix of quiet and lively settings, and most supported a design that blends familiar Carmel character with some new elements.

In questions about physical form, the leading response was for a balanced approach to building height and open space, with a preference for amenities and green space even if that required taller buildings.

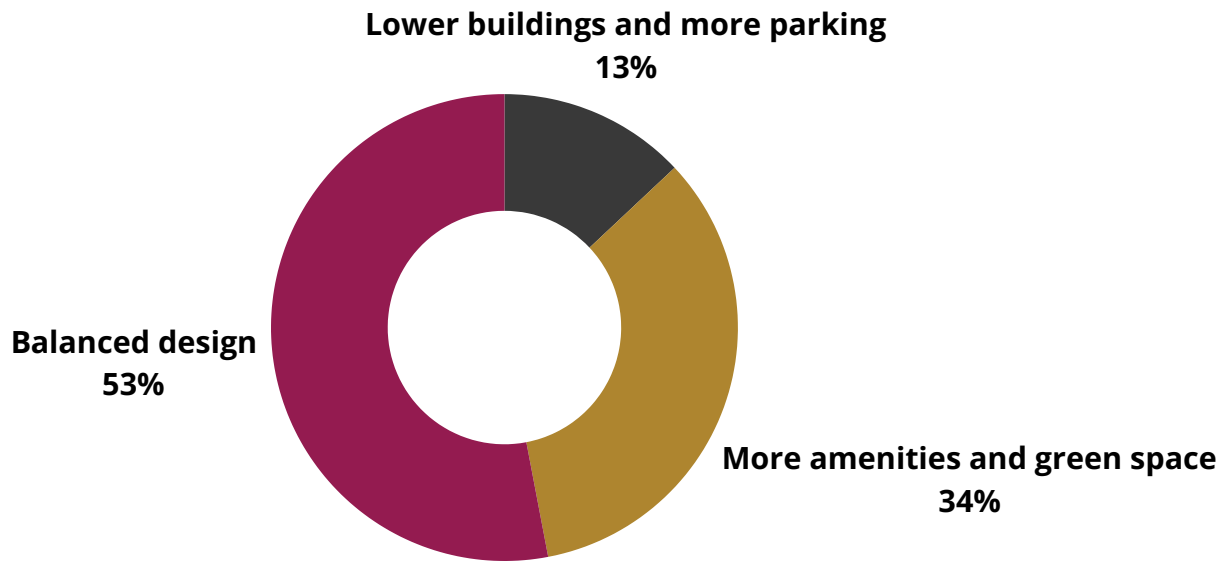
In terms of mobility, respondents emphasized walking and biking within the area over car access, while also supporting multi-modal access to the neighborhood overall, with driving and parking seen as more important than non-car options but secondary to balance.

When it comes to the feel of the area, I'd prefer...



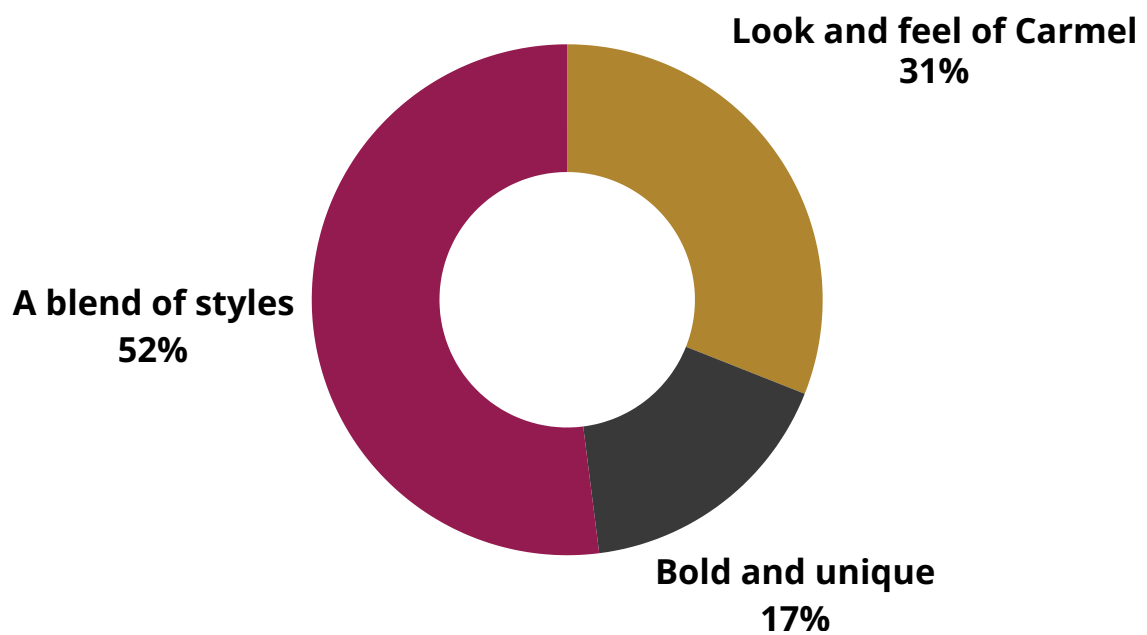
A majority of respondents (58%) favored a flexible mix of quiet and lively atmospheres, while smaller groups preferred a consistently quiet (23%) or lively (19%) environment.

When it comes to building height and open space, I'd prefer...



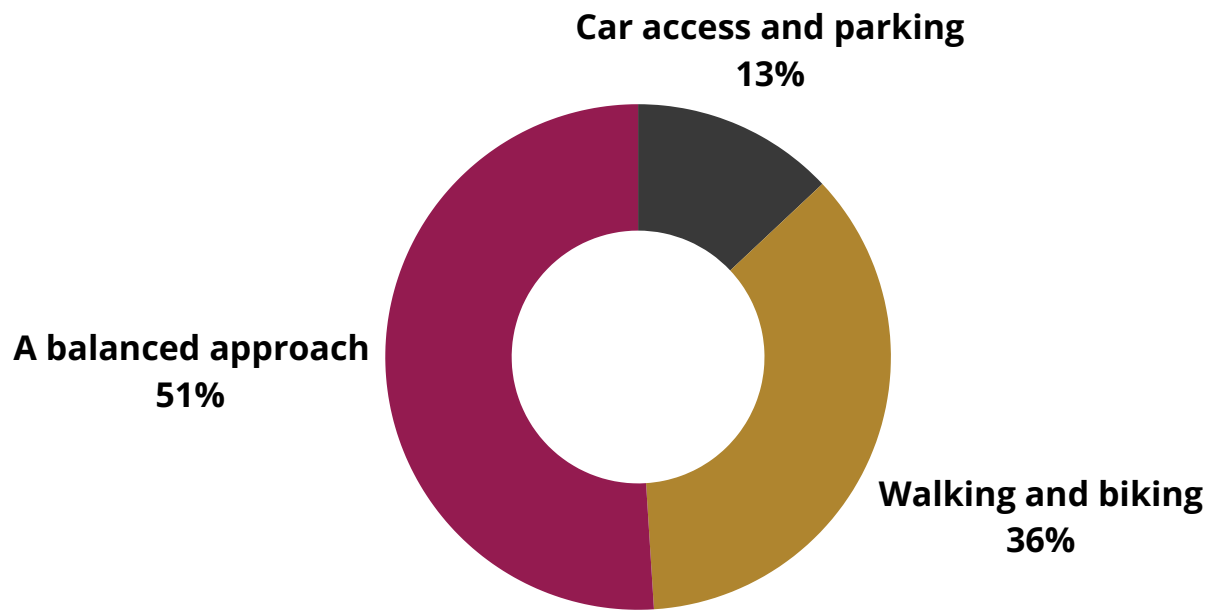
When asked about the balance between building height and open space, the leading choice was a design that mixes the two thoughtfully (53%). Many respondents also prioritized more amenities and green space even if that meant taller buildings (34%).

When it comes to the look and identity of the area, I'd prefer...



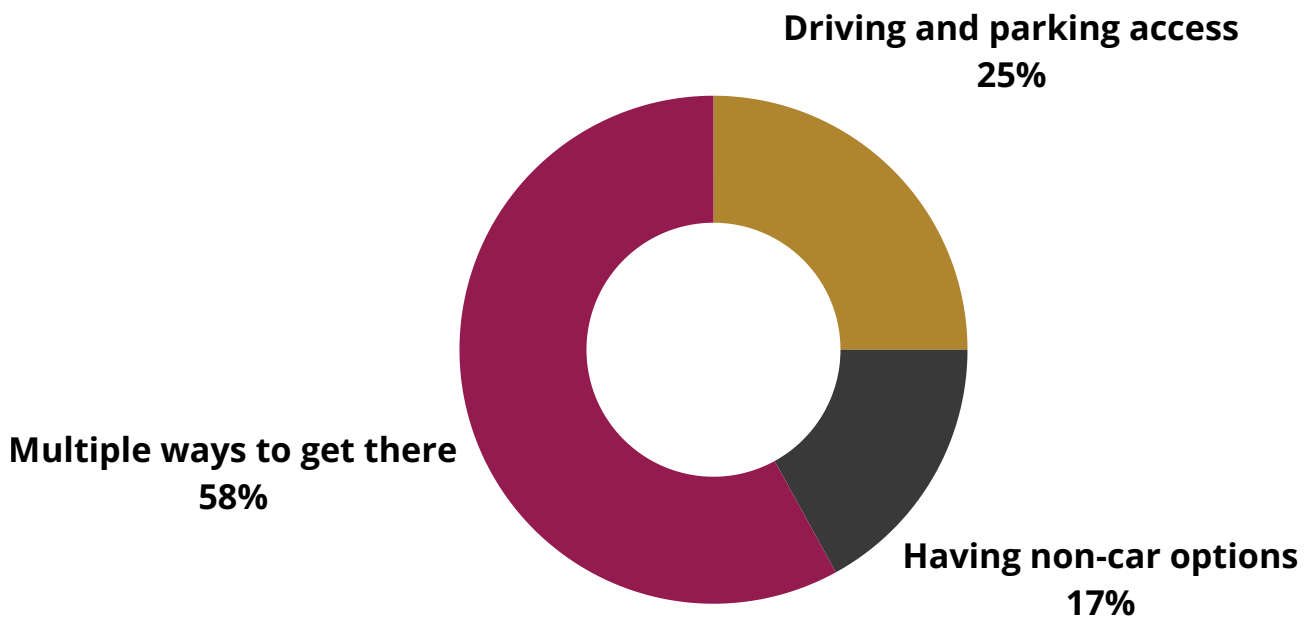
With regard to the neighborhood's identity, most respondents said they wanted a design that blends familiar and new elements (52%). Others preferred it to match the rest of Carmel (31%), while fewer favored a bold or unique design (17%).

When it comes to getting around the area, I'd prioritize...



People want the experience of being in the neighborhood to support a variety of users (51%), but the emphasis is strongest on walkability and biking (36%). Easy car access and parking within the neighborhood is still present but is a lower priority (13%).

When it comes to getting to and from the area, I'd prioritize...



People expect to travel to and from the area in a variety of ways, including driving, biking, walking, or transit (58%). Easy car access (25%) was prioritized over non-car access (17%).

COMMENT THEMES

- Housing
- Character & Identity
- Public Uses & Event Spaces
- Nature and Green Space
- Walkability
- Trails & Connectivity
- Mobility

In addition to structured survey questions, participants were given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments to share their ideas in their own words. These comments offered space for residents to raise specific suggestions, highlight priorities, or voice concerns not captured in the multiple-choice questions.

While the feedback was wide-ranging, several clear themes emerged across responses. The following seven themes summarize the most common and recurring points raised by participants.

Housing

- Concerns raised about apartments, density, and traffic impacts
- Distinction drawn between apartments (less favored) and condominiums (more acceptable)
- Calls for “missing middle” housing types such as townhomes, duplexes, and smaller single-family homes
- Interest in ranch-style homes for young buyers and downsizing seniors
- Desire for affordable housing options and ownership opportunities

Housing was one of the most frequently discussed topics in the open-ended comments. Many respondents expressed concerns about apartments, often citing the number already built in Carmel and worries about increased density. Some associated additional apartment development with potential traffic congestion and added strain on infrastructure. Several comments also drew a distinction between apartments and condominiums, with apartments viewed less favorably and ownership-based options like condos seen as more acceptable.

Beyond this, respondents emphasized the need for greater variety in housing types. Many referenced the importance of the “missing middle,” such as townhomes, duplexes, and smaller single-family options that fall between apartments and large-lot homes. There was also strong interest in ranch-style homes and smaller formats, especially for young buyers entering the market and seniors looking to downsize.

Some comments also linked housing to affordability, noting that the neighborhood should include options at more accessible price points and not be limited to luxury housing. Taken together, the feedback reflected both concern about overbuilding dense apartments and a desire for a more balanced mix of housing choices that can serve residents across different life stages and income levels.

“
[I]t would be nice to see a range of housing options in this new development, both in size and price.
”

“
Whatever you do, please don't build more condos or apartments. Our infrastructure cannot handle a higher population.
”

“
We need affordable housing in Carmel. Not apartments. Homes for people who would love to stay in Carmel but would also like to downsize.
”

“
Carmel has been talking about the 'missing middle' need for smaller for sale homes. Has anything been done about it?
Seems like a good place to put it as there is so little development land left in Carmel. For sale smaller starter or downsize houses, townhouses, and single level homes.
”

“
Build a neighborhood heavy on HOUSES, for-sale townhomes, condos & duplexes. We need people BUYING here, not RENTING. The sheer volume of apartments going up here is actively destroying what made Carmel great in the first place.
”

Character & Identity

- Desire for a distinct neighborhood identity that reflects Carmel's character
- Calls for high-quality design using natural materials
- Avoidance of generic or concrete-heavy styles
- Support for sustainable design and reuse of existing buildings
- Importance of affordable housing and retail options

Many respondents highlighted the importance of creating a neighborhood with a distinct character. Comments frequently called for high-quality design that avoids a generic or overly concrete-heavy appearance. Instead, respondents favored the use of natural materials and styles that would reflect and complement Carmel's existing charm.

Sustainability was also raised as part of the discussion. Several respondents encouraged reusing existing buildings, incorporating environmentally friendly materials, and designing with long-term durability in mind.

Affordability was tied into these themes as well. Respondents noted that the area should not cater exclusively to high-end or luxury development. They called for a balance of housing and retail options at accessible price points, ensuring the neighborhood would remain welcoming to a wide range of residents.

Fantastic opportunity to bring traditional Carmel and the original Main Street feel to this side of town. Lower height buildings, small shops, restaurants, and walking paths with existing mature trees.

The area has been primarily open space/air with low level building design... Taller buildings are adding to the congested feel and unfavorable by many. It is starting to deviate from what Carmel has been as a pleasantly inviting suburb without tall buildings.

It needs to have the classical Carmel aesthetic like City Center to give it character. It needs to have a mix of uses for a broader tax base while continuing to have the amenities and great city planning we are known for.

*The assignment, the vision, the dream:
'How do I make it feel like Italy in Carmel, Indiana?'*

Don't go for middle of the road approaches trying to please everyone. Be bold, be forward looking and do something that we don't currently have in Carmel.

I would love to see Carmel embrace clean energy...with that Carmel flare in this new neighborhood.

Public Uses and Event Spaces

- Interest in event venues and recreational spaces (sports, concerts, classes)
- Support for spaces serving kids, families, and seniors (daycare, activities, senior center)
- Debate over indoor vs. outdoor venues given seasonal weather
- Debate over tourism-focused uses (hotel, convention center) vs. resident-focused uses (local events, rental spaces)

Public and community uses were a frequent topic in the open-ended comments. Many respondents expressed interest in event venues and recreational spaces that could accommodate sports, concerts, community classes, and other activities. Several emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for children of all ages, including daycare and youth activities, as well as facilities for seniors, such as a senior center or retirement/assisted living options.

Within this theme, a few key debates emerged. Some respondents supported a mix of indoor and outdoor venues, while others questioned whether outdoor facilities would be practical given the region's colder months. Another area of discussion focused on whether the neighborhood should be designed to prioritize tourism-oriented uses — such as a hotel or convention center — or to center on resident-focused uses, like local events, meeting rooms, and flexible spaces available for community rental.

“
I really enjoy the idea of a convention center.
”

“
The outdoor amphitheater concepts are nice, but better if combined with an indoor music venue...Let's build a Carmel music scene.
”

“
Design it for comfort of Carmel residents of all ages, and of Carmel businesses. Not for density to provide tax revenue.
”

“
It should offer something for all generations - retired, working adults, youth and children's to come together and enjoy the place either for get together, activities or attend events live or otherwise.
”

“
Carmel does not have enough space for large gatherings that are designed for that purpose. As great as Midtown is, it's not a big gathering space. The only real part of Carmel for that is Carter Green, but we're quickly outgrowing that space. I'd love to see a space that is designed for larger events (THAT ARE TARGETED TO CARMEL RESIDENTS, NOT TOURISTS).
”

Nature & Green Space

- Calls to preserve mature trees and protect against loss of green space
- Mixed views on traditional park space: some support, others note noise or duplication concerns
- Interest in expanded options (gardens, sports courts, zoo, agrofarm)
- Desire for more than just grass, with landscaping that creates identity
- Support for water features that are recreational, aesthetic, and balanced in scale

Nature and open space were recurring priorities in the comments, though respondents expressed a variety of ideas about how these should take shape. Many emphasized the need to preserve mature trees and protect against the “disappearing” green space seen elsewhere in Carmel as development increases.

Some respondents called for park space, while others cautioned against creating “just another park with swings.” A few noted that the site’s proximity to the freeway might make traditional park uses less appealing. Instead, several respondents suggested alternatives such as gardens, recreation or sports courts, zoos, or even agricultural features like an agrofarm.

Participants also expressed interest in water features, particularly those that provide recreational or aesthetic value — such as ponds, fountains, or splash pads. Several noted that these should be designed in a way that adds to property values and neighborhood appeal without dedicating too much land to water or focusing solely on stormwater management.

*Trees, trees, trees. Mature trees.
Stop cutting this area. What use are
walking paths with no shade.*

*I would love more prairie and trees with
places to enjoy being outside with
nature.*

*Balance the amount of green spaces and
ponds. [Some designs] had too much park
space and water features to provide great
property value.*

*Green space is rare in Carmel.
Meaning serious-sized parks.
Please add some.*

*Desperately need more green space and
a large gathering space. Forget water
that can't be utilized (unless you will be
doing boat rentals).*

*More green space! Maybe a dedicated
bird and bat sanctuary where people can
learn about the pollinators in our
community.*

Walkability

- Identified as a top priority by respondents
- Broad support for safe, connected pedestrian pathways
- Calls for separate bike and pedestrian lanes, shade, and other features to improve safety and comfort
- Support for car-free zones in parts of the neighborhood
- Preference for a walkable environment inside the area, even if cars are needed to access it

Walkability was one of the most consistently emphasized priorities among respondents. Many saw it as essential for creating a neighborhood that feels safe, vibrant, and easy to navigate. Comments called for safe, connected sidewalks and pathways, with several stressing the need for separate lanes for bicycles and pedestrians to reduce conflicts and improve safety.

Walkability was one of the most consistently emphasized priorities among respondents. Many saw it as essential for creating a neighborhood that feels safe, vibrant, and easy to navigate. Comments highlighted the importance of safe, connected sidewalks and pathways, along with calls for separate lanes for bicycles and pedestrians to reduce conflicts and improve safety.

Respondents also stressed features that would make walking more comfortable, such as shade and thoughtful pedestrian design, and some suggested the creation of car-free zones to give priority to people on foot. While survey responses showed that cars remain an important way of accessing the neighborhood, participants strongly favored a design that emphasizes walkability and pedestrian safety once inside the area.

“

Walkable!!!

”

“

Hopefully it has at least one pedestrianized street.

”

“

Pedestrian safety and shade should be top priority.

”

“

Really want a design that doesn't put streets through the middle of everything, so that people walking or on bikes etc. can shop and dine and enjoy themselves without having to deal with cars menacing them.

”

“

Please make it more walkable than anything! It could be the main place in Carmel that prioritizes pedestrians over bikers and vehicles. If so, it could become a great 'third space' for families and civilians.

”

Trails and Connectivity

- Support for strong connections to the Monon and regional trail system
- Trails valued as both recreational and practical routes
- Calls for safe, continuous linkages to surrounding neighborhoods
- Specific interest in connecting western Carmel more directly with the urban core to ensure full integration

Respondents emphasized the importance of strong trail connections to the Monon and the broader regional trail system, seeing them as key to making the neighborhood accessible and well-integrated with Carmel. Trails were viewed not only as recreational amenities for walking, biking, and running, but also as practical routes that help tie the neighborhood into the larger city network.

Beyond trails, comments often highlighted the need for broader connectivity, including linkages to surrounding neighborhoods and activity centers. Some specifically noted the opportunity to connect western Carmel more directly with the city's urban core, helping ensure the area does not feel isolated from the rest of the community.

Together, these comments suggest that trails and broader connections are viewed as essential to ensuring the neighborhood functions as a well-linked part of Carmel, bridging western areas with the heart of the city.

“
It should feel and look like downtown Carmel, but mixed with more natural walking/biking paths throughout.
”

“
I would like there to be easy access via sidewalks and paths from West Carmel, which is difficult currently due to 116th not having much access.
”

“
A bike and pedestrian bridge over 31 (or some other connecting solution) would be really important to make this an integrated part of the City.
”

“
In order to make this a great place to live, work, and visit, it should feel safe for bicycles and pedestrians. This also requires connections to the rest of Carmel's excellent path network.
”

“
Connecting this area to the rest of Carmel's vibrant districts (Arts & Design, Midtown, City Center) should be a big priority. Avoid making it feel like an island within an otherwise industrial and car-centric area.
”

Mobility

- Cars and parking mentioned, often with concerns about traffic and density
- Interest in golf carts for getting around the site
- Suggestions for shuttles or trolleys to connect destinations
- Mentions of public transit or rail for broader access

Respondents shared a range of ideas about how people might travel to and within the neighborhood. Cars and parking were noted, often in connection with concerns about traffic and the potential impacts of density. At the same time, many participants suggested alternative modes of transportation that could make the area more convenient and attractive. These included golf carts for short trips inside the site, small shuttles or trolleys to connect destinations, and in some cases, public transit or even rail to provide broader access beyond driving.

Overall, the comments reflected support for a multimodal approach, with an interest in creating options beyond cars alone.

“
Would love to see...a possible rail system. I think there is a big need for this.
”

“
Make it golf cart friendly.
”

“
We need more food and shopping options on this side of Carmel, with safe access options that do not require cars to gain access.
”

“
While a hotel and conference center would be nice here, I think the priority should be connecting western Carmel residents to the urban core with park/event spaces and transit.
”

“
The less parking the more dense this project can be which brings in more tax revenue for the city and will be easier to develop transit around this area. I would treat it as a Transit Oriented Development.
”

Conclusions

- 1 Desire for a multi-use neighborhood with spaces to gather, shop, dine, and attend events
- 2 Strong priority on green space, shade, and a natural, family-friendly character
- 3 Preference for balanced design, with amenities and open space valued over height limits
- 4 Walking and biking central within the area; driving still important for access to and from
- 5 Favor a flexible mix of quiet and lively atmospheres, depending on time and place



The survey findings highlight a clear vision for the neighborhood as a multi-use area with spaces to gather, shop, dine, and attend events. Many participants imagined event venues, recreation facilities, and spaces for children and seniors — though opinions differed on whether these should lean more toward tourism-oriented uses, like hotels and convention centers, or local community activities.

Green space and shade were top priorities, with strong calls to preserve mature trees and prevent the “disappearing” greenery seen elsewhere in Carmel. While many wanted traditional parks, others pushed for alternatives such as gardens, courts, or even agricultural features, and several noted that water features should be designed for recreation or aesthetics rather than just stormwater.

A balanced design was preferred, with respondents favoring amenities and open space over strict limits on building height. Still, some expressed concern that apartments or taller buildings might increase traffic, while others saw opportunities for more diverse and affordable housing options, including “missing middle” housing.

Mobility preferences showed a distinction between movement within the neighborhood and access to it. Walking and biking were emphasized for getting around inside the site, with frequent calls for safe, well-lit paths and even car-free zones. At the same time, driving and parking were viewed as important for access — alongside creative suggestions like golf carts, shuttles, and, in some cases, public transit or rail connections.

Finally, respondents favored an atmosphere that could flex between quiet and lively, depending on the time and place. This desire for balance reflects the broader theme of the survey: a neighborhood that is connected, adaptable, and welcoming to a wide range of people and activities.

An illustration of a white document with horizontal lines, a dark grey tab on the left, and a magnifying glass with a gold frame and a purple handle. The document and magnifying glass are positioned on the left side of a gold rectangular background.

Design Idea Board Results

Along with the survey, residents were invited to provide feedback through design boards created by the three nationally recognized firms: Browning Day, Ratio, and Yard& Co.

Each team submitted boards illustrating different approaches to the site, and a blank slate board was also provided for residents to share their own original ideas.

This method was designed to be more qualitative and visual, capturing immediate reactions to specific design concepts. Residents could note what they liked, what raised concerns, and what stood out to them.

ENGAGEMENT TOTALS

115
Participants



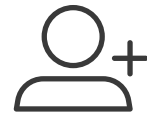
1294
Reactions



263
Comments

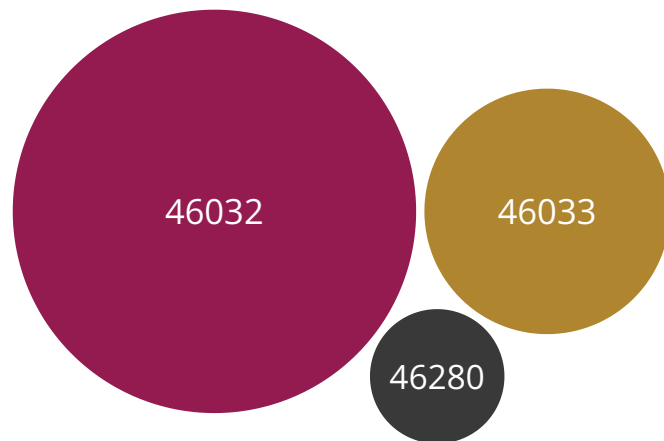


31
Subscribers



The design idea boards received 263 comments with 1294 total upvotes from 115 participants.

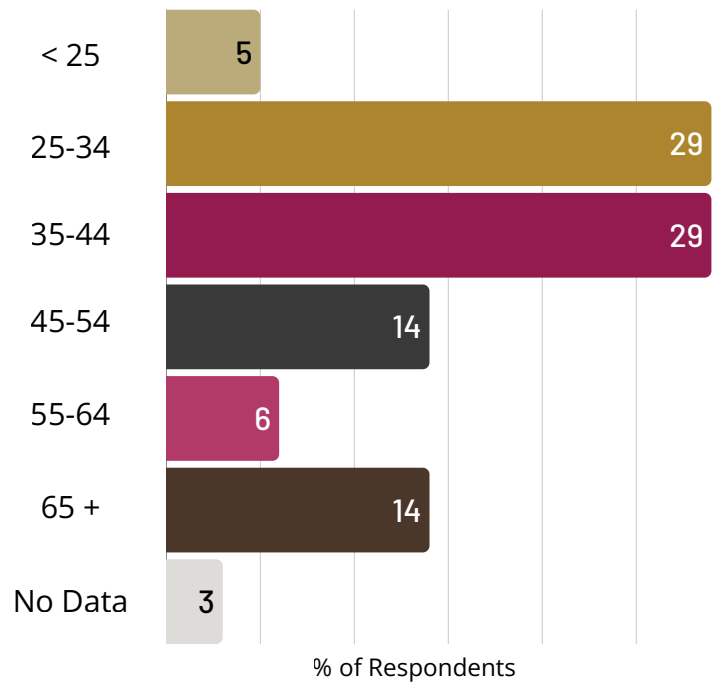
ZIP CODES



Survey participants who offered their residential zip code were primarily residents of Carmel, with the majority of comments coming from zip codes 46032 (n=27), 46033 (n=10) and 46280 (3).

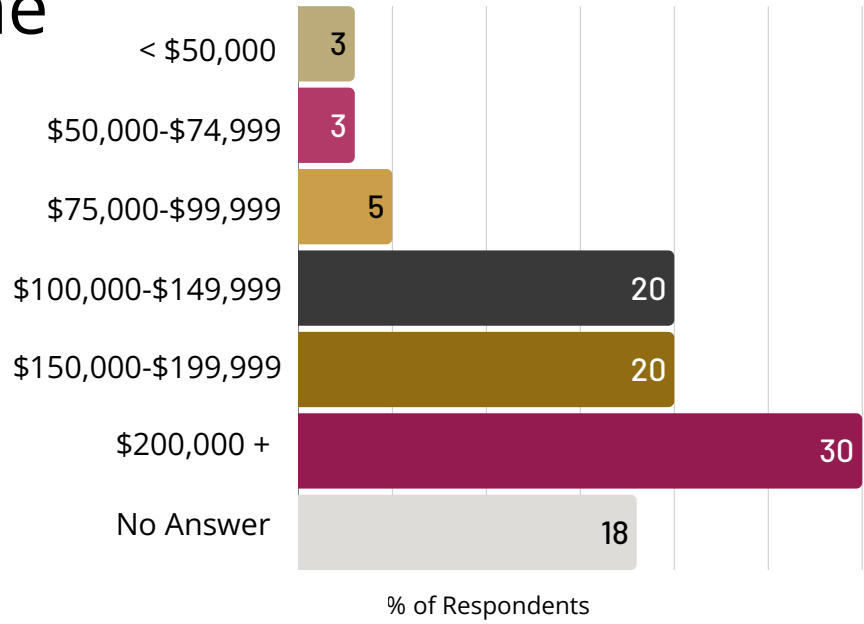
DEMOGRAPHICS

Age



Over half of the respondents for the idea boards are aged between 35 and 44 (58%).

Income



Participants disproportionately reported annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more (70%), with nearly one-third (30%) having incomes of \$200,000 per year or more. Fewer participants represented annual household income levels below \$100,000 (11%).



Browning Day was presented as 'Team A' on the public engagement portal.

Vision: At the heart of the CNO District Art Meadow is a vision to: Restore the land — transforming sprawling asphalt into a vibrant ecosystem of native meadows, shaded trails, and clean water systems. Amid this renewal emerges a central meadow where a sculpted amphitheater hosts local performances, framed by various residential options, convention or conference center and cafés that invite gathering and connection.

Designed to Elevate the everyday, the district becomes a shared stage for life — from young families picnicking on the lawn, to active adults enjoying community gardens or yoga at sunrise. This is a place that doesn't just serve its users — it inspires them, fostering creativity, wellness, and a deeper connection to each other and the land.

Key Features: Our design for the CNO District Art Meadow exemplifies the principles of a successful mixed-use development by seamlessly integrating diverse building types and experiences within a walkable, human-scaled environment. The plan includes a balanced mix of housing options, flexible office spaces, a museum destination, vibrant retail, and dining, all anchored by a 12-acre central Art Meadow that serves as the cultural and ecological heart of the district. A two-mile long pedestrian path weaves through the site, connecting residents, workers, and visitors to curated entertainment venues, public art installations, and civic gathering spaces. By fostering a dynamic blend of living, working, and cultural engagement, the Art Meadow becomes not just a destination— but a sustainable, inclusive community.

Comment Themes



Event Venues

Calls for larger, more ambitious spaces for concerts, sports, and community events.



Design Character

Concerns that the design looked too generic and didn't reflect Carmel's identity.



Green Space

Appreciation for open areas, though some found them underwhelming or underutilized



Density & Balance

Mixed views on traffic, scale, and ambition of the plan.

The comments below reflect the most common themes raised by participants in response to Browning Day's concept.

Event Venues: Many participants emphasized the need for bigger and more ambitious event facilities. They expressed that Carmel's current venues are too small and suggested a space capable of hosting regional events.

Green Space: Respondents valued the inclusion of green areas but noted that the design felt incomplete or uninviting. Some worried it resembled a stadium rather than a true park, and many wanted features that would make the space more engaging.

Design Character: A consistent theme was concern that the proposal did not reflect Carmel's established character. People felt it looked too modern, too generic, or out of place compared to the city's current development.

Density & Balance: Participants expressed differing views on the scale of the proposal. Some were worried about oversaturation, traffic, and congestion, while others thought the plan should go even further with higher density and greater ambition.

SAMPLE OF COMMENTS:

"This doesn't look like Carmel. It looks like Westfield and I don't mean that as a compliment." (31

upvotes)

"All the event venues in Carmel are too small, so I appreciate the concept of a space that can genuinely accommodate the number of attendees at city events. However, the design could benefit from a bit more character." (28 upvotes)

"I don't like the super-modern look of this and prefer a more traditional look (like Carmel's City Centre area). The green space is nice, but needs more trees if its going to be used frequently aside from events. I would hope there are cafes, restaurants, and shops in addition to the green space to draw people to the area." (26 upvotes)

"Carmel is starting to become over saturated with apartments so love seeing it's not just apartments that'll stress road infrastructure further. The green space is amazing for events. Needs more parking." (21 upvotes)

"Feels like a lot of wasted space. Without constant events, the green space will be empty most of the time. I'd rather see that used for housing, dog parks, playgrounds, or even just more office and retail to get better tax value." (20 upvotes)

"Green Space should have more additional pieces to activate the space such as gardens, benches, etc." (20 upvotes)



Ratio was presented as 'Team B' on the public engagement portal.

Headwaters stands at the intersection of progress and place. An emerging symbol of modern living where nature, design, and culture converge. It is a district designed to live, work, and play at the center of what's next.

Purpose: To create a multigenerational district that brings people together through thoughtful design, inclusivity, and a shared connection to nature.

Vision: To become Carmel's next defining neighborhood, where city and nature converge in a place that is bold, dynamic, and alive with possibility.

The Pier: A waterfront neighborhood where nature softens urban life. The Pier centers around a signature residential pier, a vibrant waterfront destination created by reimagining the regional stormwater system as a lively, urbanized water feature. Trails, plazas, and green corridors link a diverse range of homes with entertainment, retail, and recreation.

The Landing: A business district redefined by livability & civic presence. Serving as the commercial heart of the development, The Landing supports the evolving Meridian Corridor. Anchored by a flexible multi-purpose park, this district blends hospitality, retail, office, and civic life within a connected, walkable environment.

The Forum: An urban village anchored by culture, housing, and civic space. Compact and

walkable, The Forum is shaped by narrow streets, public plazas, and cultural destinations. This neighborhood brings together residential living with civic and retail amenities, all centered around a landmark plaza and fountain.

Comment Themes



Water Features

Strong reactions to water features; praised for uniqueness but concerns about use and practicality.



Distinctive Appeal

Several noted this plan stood out as their favorite, offering something new and different.



Land Use

Criticism that too much valuable land was given to ponds or retention areas instead of other amenities.



Amenities

Calls for community-focused features such as daycare, senior living, and innovative ideas like green roofs.

The comments below reflect the most common themes raised by participants in response to Ratio's concept.

Water Features: Water was the defining element of this proposal and drew both praise and criticism. Many participants appreciated the distinctiveness and beauty of the design, describing it as unique for Carmel. At the same time, others questioned the practicality of dedicating so much land to water and raised concerns about whether these features would provide real value to the community.

Distinctive Appeal: Several comments highlighted that this concept stood out from the others for its originality. The design was seen as bold and different, which for some participants made it their favorite. Others, however, questioned whether standing out alone was enough to justify the approach.

Land Use Concerns: Even those who liked the aesthetics often questioned whether the design allocated space effectively. Many respondents felt the water features occupied too much of the site, crowding out other possible uses. This tension between visual appeal and practicality came through strongly in the comments.

Amenities: Beyond the water, respondents mentioned features they wanted to see strengthened. Green roofs were appreciated as a sustainability element, and several comments emphasized the need for senior living options within the design. These comments reflected an interest in broadening the proposal beyond its central water theme.

SAMPLE OF COMMENTS:

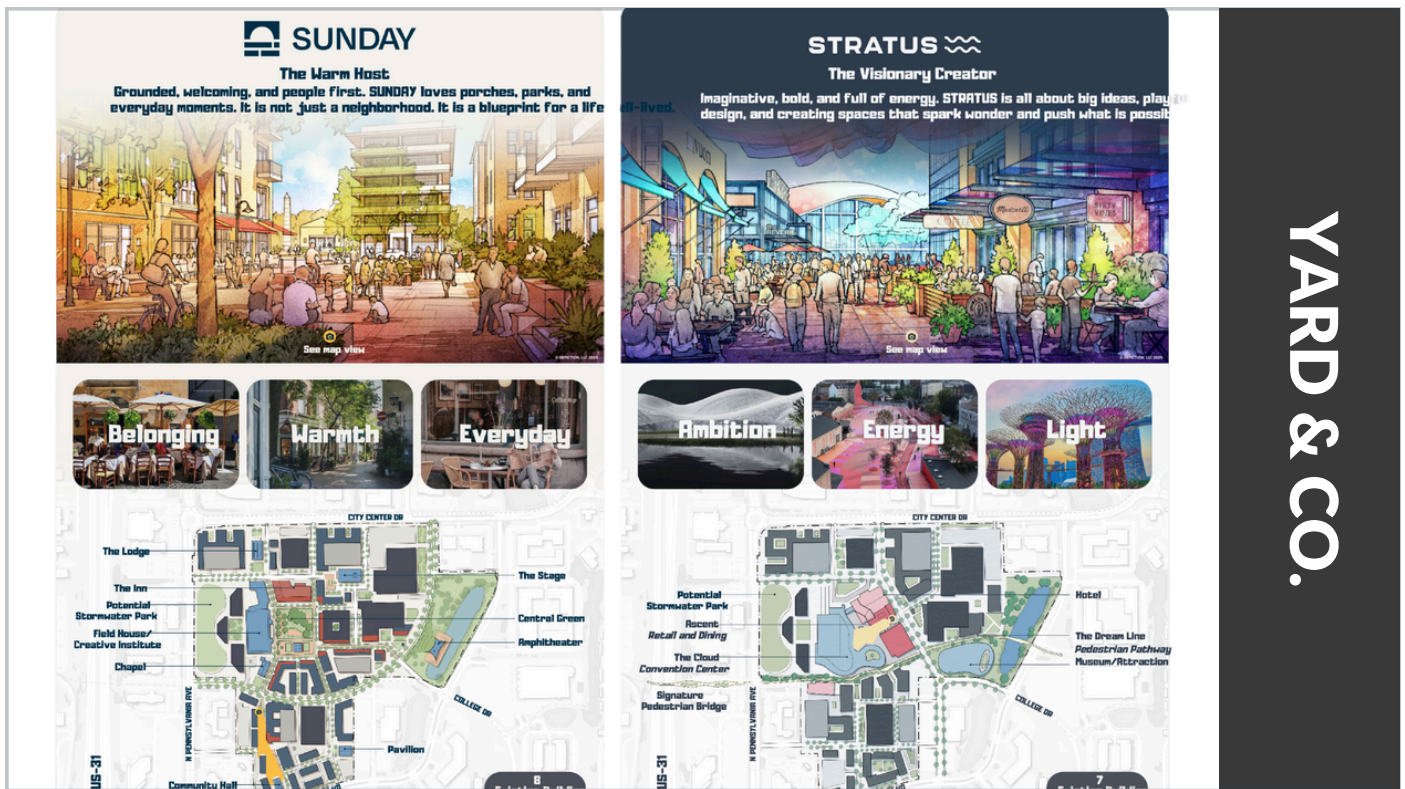
"Like the water features as something different in the community but... TOO MANY APARTMENTS! It'll stress our roads further. We need more amenities and community space, less generic apartment buildings." (41 upvotes)

"LOVE the 'on the water' neighborhood idea!!! But this looks like it will be thousands of apartments. Where are the houses? Enough with all the generic apartments going up lately! WE NEED HOUSES!" (32 upvotes)

"Looks like an office park. Who can use water space in this area with all the geese. Looks nice but without a goose mitigation plan is wasted space." (22 upvotes)

"This is my favorite by far, definitely different from what we currently have in Central Carmel. If we can keep the geese population out of this area, then I think the pond could be used for paddle boats or even kayaks, or something that the community could rent out to make use of the new area." (19 upvotes)

"Too much water. Like the nature aspects but needs more green usable space. Also if all those buildings are apartments, forget it. Small homes are needed especially for young people starting out and the over 55 crowd wanting to remain in Carmel and in their own homes. Not everything has to be apartments. Carmel has missed the boat on this issue in redevelopment over and over." (16 upvotes)



YARD & CO.

Yard & Co. was presented as 'Team C' on the public engagement portal.

Yard & Company presented two contrasting “personalities” to spark community conversation about the district’s future.

The Warm Host: A grounded and welcoming vision, "The Warm Host" is all about everyday moments — front porches, shaded paths, and relatable human-scale spaces. It's crafted as "a blueprint for a life well lived," emphasizing familiarity, comfort, and inclusivity as the heart of neighborhood design.

The Visionary Creator: Bold, imaginative, and energetic, "The Visionary Creator" (Stratus) pushes boundaries and celebrates creativity. It invites wonder with playful design elements and unexpected forms, offering a visionary and dynamic approach to place-making.

Comment Themes



Sunday Concept

Widely praised; viewed as the most complete and cohesive vision.



Housing Density

Concerns about too many apartments and added traffic.



Green Space

Requests for more trees, shade, and active natural spaces.



Pedestrian Focus

Strong support for walkability and the Dream Line bridge.

The comments below reflect the most common themes raised by participants in response to Yard & Co.'s concept.

Sunday Concept: Many participants identified the “Sunday Plan” as the strongest idea overall. It stood out for its clear vision and cohesive approach, with repeated praise for the pedestrian boulevard and the emphasis on a lively, people-oriented core. Several respondents described it as the most innovative or distinctive option compared to others.

Housing Density: A significant portion of the feedback centered on housing density, with concerns about the number of apartments included in the plan. Several respondents worried that the design appeared overbuilt, raising issues of traffic, congestion, and overdevelopment. While the comments leaned critical, they reflected a clear community sensitivity to the scale of new housing in the area.

Green Space: The importance of integrating green space came up frequently. Respondents wanted more trees, shade, and intentional landscaping that would make the area feel inviting and usable. Some expressed concern that the balance between buildings and open space was off, suggesting that the design needed more visible and functional natural areas.

Pedestrian Focus: The pedestrian-friendly features of the Yard & Co. concept drew consistent support. In particular, the Dream Line bridge was cited as a standout element, alongside enthusiasm for the boulevard and walkway connections. Many felt this emphasis on walkability distinguished the plan and contributed to a people-centered design.

SAMPLE OF COMMENTS:

"The Sunday design is the only one out of all of these that seems to feel like Carmel. Is 'The Lodge' a concept for a hotel? Love the vibe & idea of an upscale, cozy lodge hotel for us. Make any new neighborhood bike-friendly, have more shade trees, flowers & fountains. Minimize hard lines & angles. Maximize warmth, fun, beautiful, cozy, friendly--that's Carmel." (39 upvotes)

"Way too many apartments. If there's residential it needs to be way less units and preferably residents that'll be invested in the community. I.e. condos, townhomes, houses" (27 upvotes)

"It gives a pedestrian focused, European feel to Carmel that we are missing. I think a water feature mixed in would be a nice touch and would elevate the space. I think the Stratus option is too out there for our community." (26 upvotes)

"I love 'The Dream Line', pedestrian bridge, and 400 more housing units from Stratus, but like the overall "warmth" vibe of Sunday." (23)

"Not enough nature and green space. Too many apartments - enough with these modern apartments throughout Carmel. Would so much rather see more traditional design (like the City Centre) with shops, restaurants, entertainment, and retail on multiple floors - like a small outdoor mall - that also incorporates rooftops and open spaces. I prefer the Sunday design and idea and feel that it would last much longer as a staple in Carmel rather than a trendy area like Stratus proposes." (23 upvotes)

Comment Themes



Gathering Spaces

Calls for shaded gathering spots, markets, event areas, and creative water features.



Housing Diversity

Desire for a mix of housing types, from starter homes and missing middle to senior living options.



Green Space

Strong support for preserving mature trees and creating shaded, nature-forward recreation areas.



Character

Emphasis on avoiding a “copy-paste” design and instead creating something unique and distinctly Carmel.

The comments below reflect the most common themes raised by participants who offered input on the 'blank slate' board.

Green Space: Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of nature in shaping this district. Many urged the City to preserve the site’s established trees and to create recreation areas that are shaded, welcoming, and usable by residents of all ages. Rather than seeing another conventional park, participants expressed interest in green features that add character and purpose, including grassy areas, gardens, and recreation zones. Some tied this directly to sustainability, noting that Carmel should take this rare opportunity to model best practices in sustainable site and building design.

Housing Diversity: Participants highlighted a strong desire for housing variety. Many referenced “missing middle” options, such as duplexes, cottage courts, and smaller starter homes, to provide opportunities for young families and downsizing seniors. Others emphasized senior housing specifically, calling for independent living, assisted living, and memory care as part of the mix. Respondents saw value in balancing condos, townhomes, and single-family homes, with an emphasis on walkable, human-scaled neighborhoods rather than large-scale apartment developments.

Gathering Spaces: Public gathering emerged as a recurring priority. Respondents envisioned shaded areas for strolling, tree-lined gathering spots, and flexible community spaces for dining, shopping, or recreation. Some comments suggested incorporating event areas, European-style markets, or local restaurants to activate the district. Water features were also mentioned as

desirable, especially when designed to soften the built environment and create visual and recreational interest.

Innovation & Character: Many participants encouraged the City to use this site as an opportunity to showcase Carmel's leadership in planning and design. They stressed that the district should not simply replicate past developments but instead bring something distinctive to the community. Respondents wanted architectural variety, smaller footprints for eclectic businesses, and a unique identity that balances Carmel's established charm with forward-looking innovation.

SAMPLE OF COMMENTS:

"It would be really cool to make the whole district a green/sustainable design area, including the building designs. Show the rest of the country how to do it right!" (23 upvotes)

"There are beautiful established trees in this area. Don't cut them down. We need green, shade, grassy recreation areas for all types of citizens' needs." (19 upvotes)

"Would love to see solar energy incorporated into the site." (12 upvotes)

"With this location, it should be a mix of condos, townhomes, and single family homes along with retail and small businesses or even larger that want to be part of a small community. The walkable area in the third one was great. The water in the second would be unique to Carmel. But, stick with traditional design, do something that doesn't otherwise exist, have great shopping and restaurants, and do it all without taking anything away from downtown." (8 upvotes)

"As Carmel is working to become carbon neutral, this proposal needs to be as close as possible to neutral by utilizing our knowledge. We are starting fresh here. Let's start on the right foot! Also seconding the various housing types to buy without existing zoning, so many different options can coincide and coexist in this area!" (8 upvotes)



NINETEEN
ELEVEN

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