

Savannah Canal District Public Survey Highlights

August 2020

Melanie Wilson, MPC Executive Director

Photo courtesy of City of Savannah



OVERVIEW

Upon the request of City Council, the MPC organized a 40-day effort to capture input and comments on the Savannah Canal District Master Plan.

INPUT METHODS

The MPC's methods of obtaining input and commentary included...

- 40-Day Online Survey
- 2 Virtual Public Meetings
- In Person Meeting by Appointment
- Dedicated Phone Line for Responses
- Dedicated Email for Comment
- Mail directly to and from MPC office

INTRODUCTION



Photo courtesy of City of Savannah

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION METHODS

To capture the most public input and comments on the Savannah Canal District Master Plan, we used a variety of methods including...


- Press Releases
- Posters with Survey Information
- News Media (TV, Radio, & Print)
- Social Media (Facebook & Twitter)
- Neighborhood Associations Contact via City of Savannah Community Services Department
- Email List-serves



Why You?

To continue the efforts of the City of Savannah, the MPC has been asked to collect additional public feedback about the "Arena and Canal District". The new Arena will become an anchor for a planned community entertainment district west of Downtown Savannah. Within this short survey, you will be asked to share your feedback and comments on the proposed development.

Thank you for your input!



Link to Survey
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CanalDistrictMPCReview>

Telephone for Comment
912.651.1480

Email for Comment
CanalDistrictMPCReview@thempc.org

Survey Link on MPC Page
<https://www.thempc.org>

QR Code to Survey



OUTREACH

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Over 280 individuals responded to the Survey or participated in the feedback process during the 40-day period.

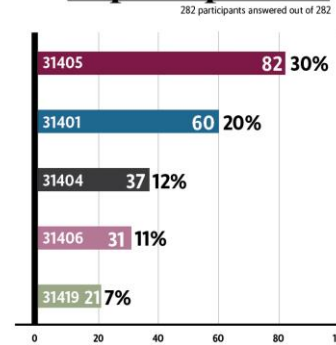
WHO WERE OUR PARTICIPANTS

- 50% lived in 31405 and 31401 zip codes
- 72% were in the 35-64 age range
- 70% who participated had seen or reviewed the Canal District Master Plan

PARTICIPANTS

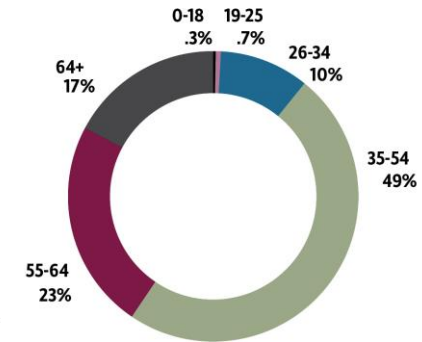
Questions 1 & 2

Where do you live?
Top 5 Zip codes



How old are you?

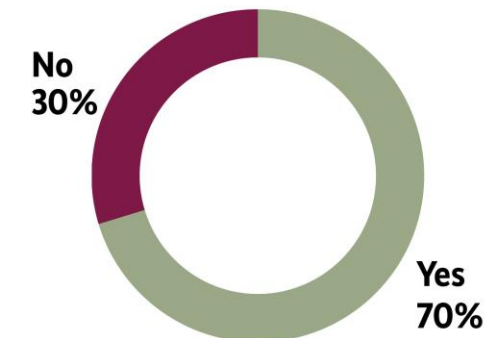
257 participants answered out of 259



Question 3

Have you seen or reviewed the Master Plan for The City of Savannah's Proposed Arena and Canal District Master Plan?

281 participants answered out of 282



SNAPSHOT OF THE SURVEY

The Survey consisted of 14 questions that were aimed to gather input on various elements of the Savannah Canal District Master Plan.

8 of the 14 survey questions are listed in this overview while the full survey with all of the questions are provided in the City Council's Technical Memo packet.

FINDINGS

Question 5

Please tell us your thoughts on the draft concepts and strategies for the Proposed Arena and Canal District Master Plan?

239 participants answered out of 282

Top 5 Recurring Comments

- Lack of Access to Document
- Waste of Resources
- Lack of Community Participation
- +Forward Thinking Plan
- +Looks Amazing, Inspirational

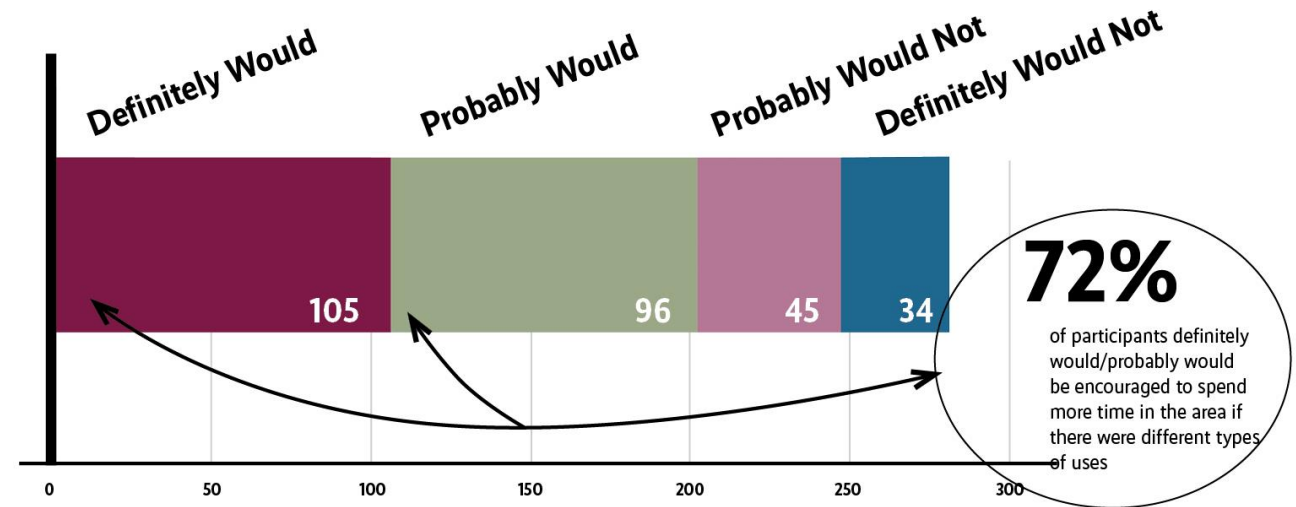
SNAPSHOT OF THE SURVEY

72% of participants “definitely would” or “probably would” be encouraged to spend more time in the area if there were different types of uses.

Question 7

Would different types of new uses and activities in the arena (residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or entertainment uses) encourage you to spend more time in the Proposed Arena and Canal District?

280 participants out of 282



FINDINGS

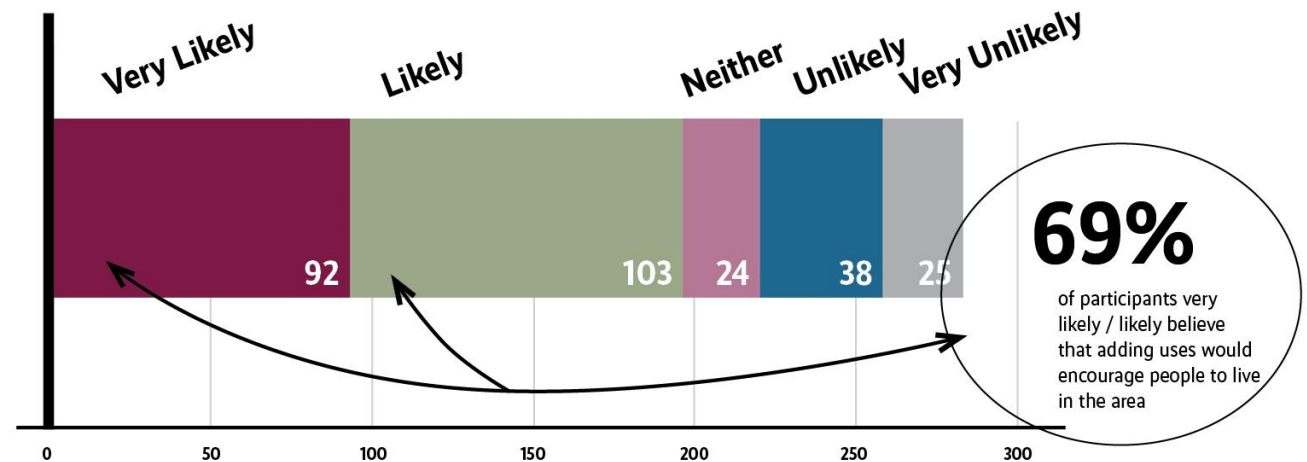
SNAPSHOT OF THE SURVEY

69% of participants responded that adding improvements would “very likely” or “likely” encourage people to live in the area.

Question 8

Would adding more improvements (residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or entertainment uses) encourage people to live within the Proposed Arena and Canal District?

282 participants answered out of 282



FINDINGS

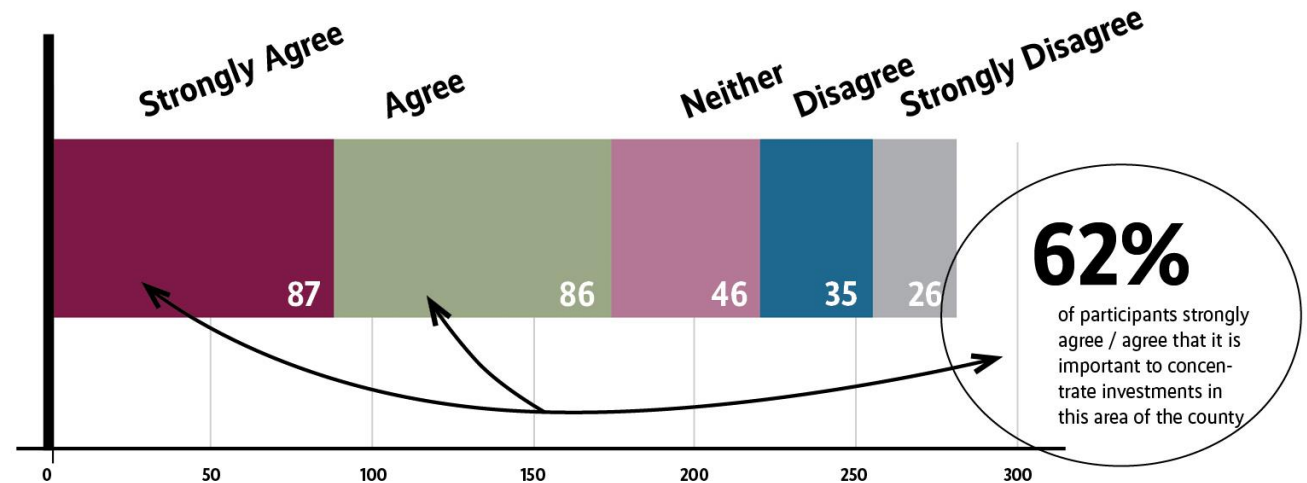
SNAPSHOT OF THE SURVEY

62% of participants “strongly agree” or “agree” that it is important to concentrate investments in this area of Chatham County.

Question 9

Is it important to concentrate investments in this area that will impact the entire County?

280 participants answered out of 282



FINDINGS

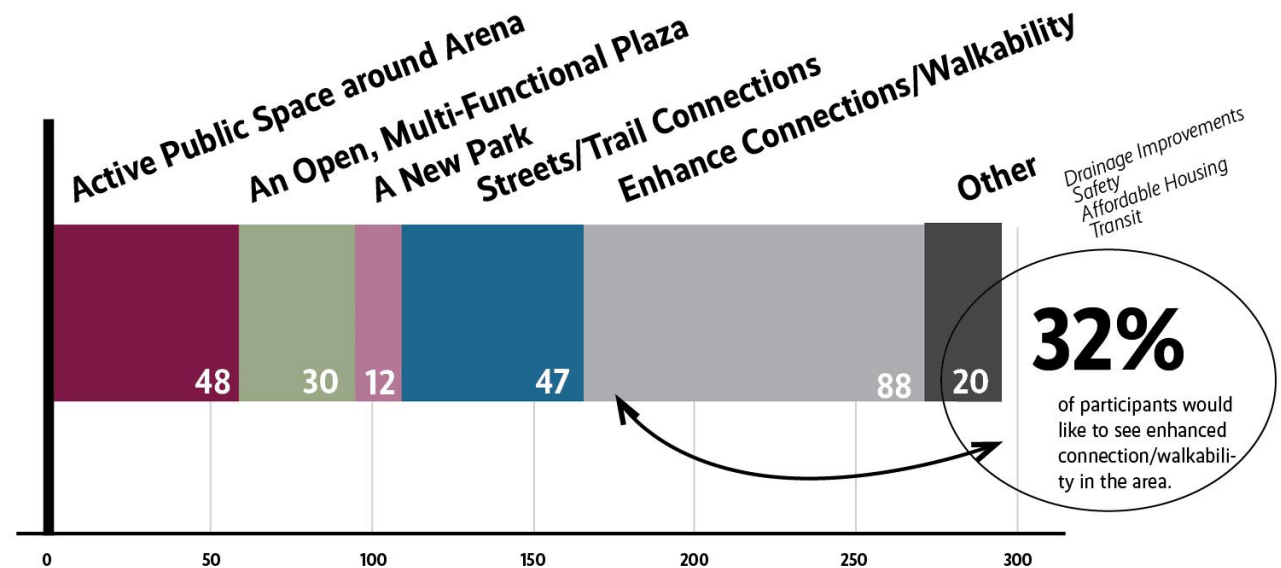
SNAPSHOT OF THE SURVEY

32% of participants would like to see enhanced connections or more walkability in this area of the City of Savannah.

Question 10

Which improvements would you like to see happen in the proposed Arena and Canal District?

277 participants answered out of 282



FINDINGS

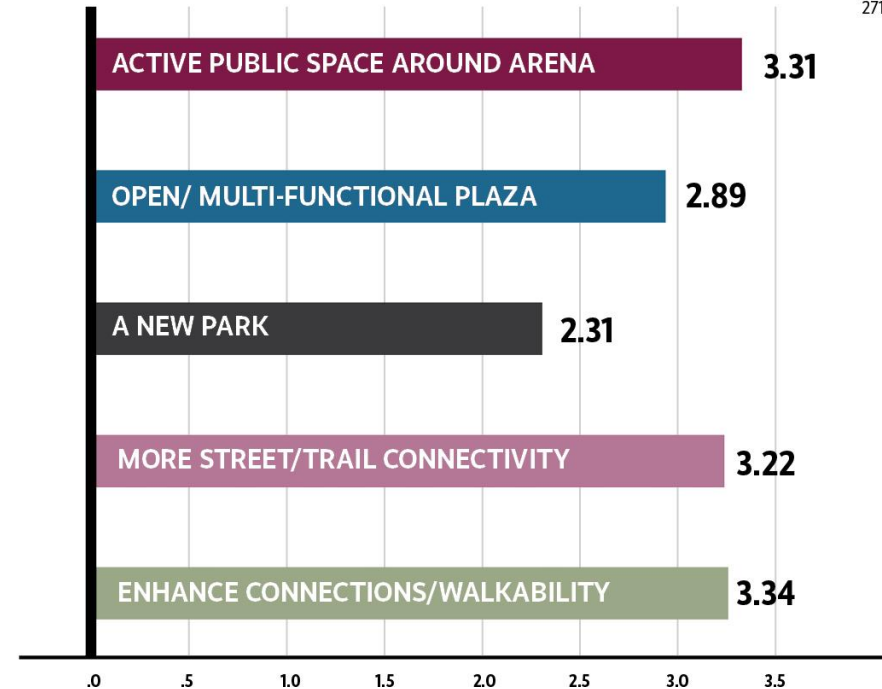
SNAPSHOT OF THE SURVEY

When asked to prioritize 5 public space improvements, the Survey respondents' top preference was to enhance connections and walkability in addition to adding active public space around the arena.

Question 11

Please prioritize the following public space improvements that you would like to see happen in the Canal District in order of 1 to 5 (with 1 being what you would like to see the most)?

271 participants answered out of 282



FINDINGS

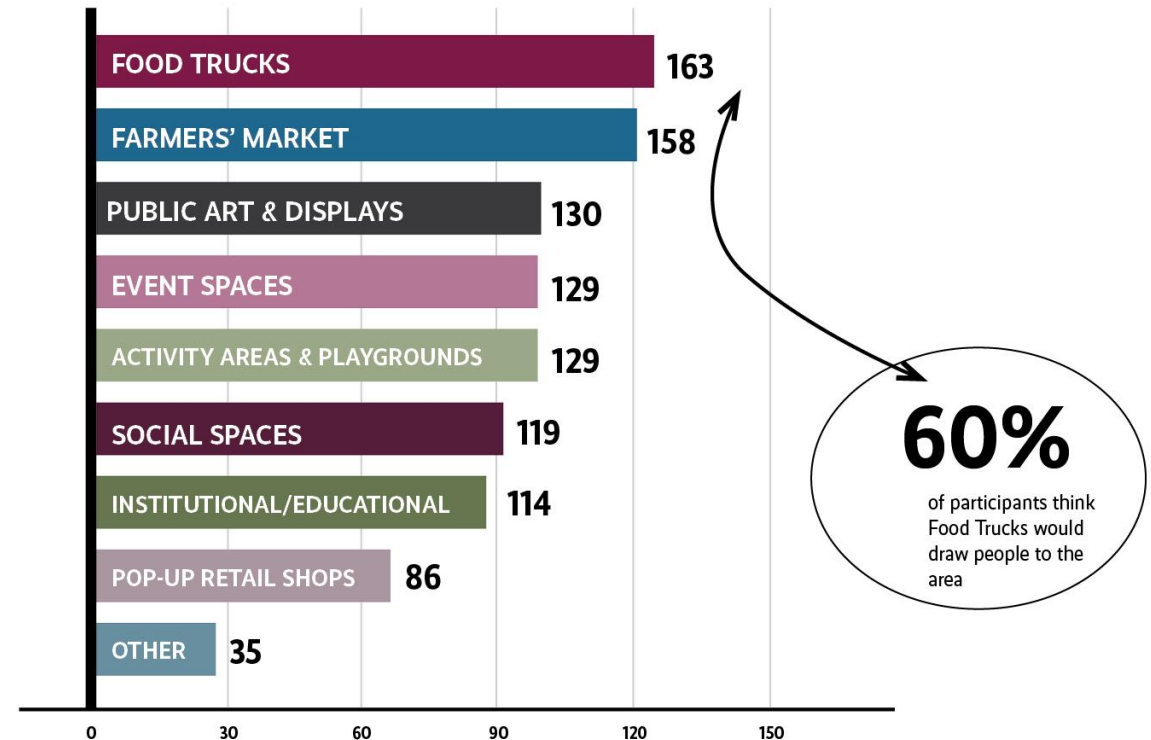
SNAPSHOT OF THE SURVEY

60% of participants think Food Trucks would draw people to the area and 57% think that a Farmers' Market would draw people to the area.

Question 12

What activities and/or spaces would draw people to the area?

275 participants answered out of 282



FINDINGS

SNAPSHOT OF THE SURVEY

The community is grateful for the opportunity to give feedback however there are numerous concerns.

Question 14

Are there any **other comments or suggestions** you would like to give?

156 participants answered out of 282

Top 5 Recurring Comments

- Mistake, Disaster, Waste of Money
- Don't Build, You're not Listening
- Fear of Gentrification (Displacement)
- Connectivity Issues, Trails
- +Thank you for Listening

FINDINGS

MPC BOARD OVERVIEW COMMENTS

On June 9, 2020, a short presentation on the Canal District Master Plan was given by City of Savannah staff to the MPC. A summary of the MPC's immediate findings on the proposed project are as follows:

- MPC appreciates the work done thus far, however, the Board believes that the Community Services Department should have been more involved with the process at the onset.
- This large development will ultimately be an asset attracting residents and tourists Countywide however, only the residents directly adjacent to the Canal District have been asked for feedback.
- The public is unable to access and review the Master Plan documents, please add the Master Plan documents to the City's website for review to ensure transparency. Additionally, please keep the community, residential, and commercial alike, well-informed of the progress and next steps of the project.
- Land use, zoning, and density changes have not been evaluated with the MPC for feasibility of implementation.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS

MPC BOARD OVERVIEW COMMENTS CONTINUED...

The proposed Master Plan document is not complete due to the incomplete answers in critical areas, most notably in land use, transportation, drainage, parking, and potential negative environmental impacts.

- A unified vision for the Arena District is needed and the MPC has not been included in discussions of the revised Canal District Zoning and Overlay District. To ensure a streamlined process, the MPC should be engaged as expeditiously as possible.
- Given the lack of affordable housing, the displacement of residents in the Springfield Terrace and Brickyard communities, who are low and very low-income tenants and homeowners, has not been addressed.
- Downtown connectivity, transportation, and transit evaluations have not been completed.
- Drainage in the area is of major concern. Most notably is that more impervious coverage will add additional flooding issues for neighboring communities that already battle flooding.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS

MPC BOARD OVERVIEW COMMENTS CONTINUED...

- There are numerous environmental considerations that need more vetting to include wetland mitigation/preservation and stormwater conveyance.
- Concentrated education and outreach on any alternative financing, should be developed and implemented. Affected property owners in nearby neighborhoods need time to understand and prepare for impacts.
- Adverse impact on the residents of Cloverdale, Belaire, and parts of Carver Village with respect to emergency vehicles gaining access to the communities during high traffic events at the arena is a major concern.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS

NEXT STEPS

After review, the Planning Commission wants to make sure that a Community Focused Land Use plan is developed, to include addressing Environmental and Transportation Concerns. After a Land Use plan is developed, the MPC should be included in discussions of the Revised Canal District Zoning and Overlay District to ensure a streamlined process for the community, City and MPC staff, and elected officials.

MPC has the capacity in house to do this but is not contracted to provide this service. However, we will be glad to discuss the scope of work needed to provide this service and create a cooperative partnership.



Photo courtesy of City of Savannah

MPC RECOMMENDATION

