

# Listening Session Report

April 14, 2022

## 1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

**Background:** Minneapolis Public Works, Public Policy Project and NEOO Partners conducted a series of Listening Sessions with thirty community stakeholders (residents, community leaders, business owners). These activities occurred in the form of interviews and focused on understanding stakeholders' experiences and desires for the intersection of 38th & Chicago. The goal of these interviews was to aid in refining alignment with the project goals, vision, and future public engagement efforts, which are planned to occur in 2022. This document summarizes the feedback received from these interviews which occurred from December 2021 to March 2022.

## 2.0 KEY FINDINGS

### Summary

The interviews highlighted many perspectives, opportunities, and concerns. The comments captured from these interviews have been grouped into project desires, intersection design perspectives, and additional needs.

#### Project Desires:

- **Support & Hope:** There is general support for this project to begin and a hope that it can help the community move forward in a positive manner.
- **Community Influence:** Engagement opportunities should allow community stakeholders to influence project decisions.
- **Clear Communications:** Communications should be clear and frequent throughout the duration of the project.

#### Intersection Design Perspectives:

- **George Floyd Square, a Sacred Space:** George Floyd Square is a sacred place that should be respected and preserved for future generations.
- **Intersection Redesign:** Despite varying perspectives on how the intersection should be redesigned, there is a common and consistent desire to allow all community stakeholders to provide input on design options.
- **Reduce Vehicle Traffic:** There is a common desire for reduced vehicle traffic in the area.
- **Preserve Public Space:** Preserving public space for gathering within George Floyd Square is important to many community stakeholders.

#### Additional Needs:

- **Trauma & Healing:** Many community stakeholders continue to experience trauma from the reverberations of the death of George Floyd. The project team understands that it is imperative to integrate healing components into this project.
- **24 Demands for Justice:** There are varying perspectives on how well the City of Minneapolis has accommodated the 24 Demands for Justice. Some think the City has done enough, others think the City should be doing more.
- **Protect Local Businesses:** Concerns have been expressed about the impact on businesses, especially Black owned businesses. Many of these businesses have closed and the few that remain open are struggling. They need resources to help them survive through these challenging economic times.
- **Public Safety is a Concern:** Many community members have expressed safety concerns from a crime and transportation perspective. Crime has been a historic issue in the area, but transportation safety concerns (reckless driving and impacts to pedestrian safety) have become more prevalent in the area since the death of George Floyd.
- **Investments Needed:** There is a need for investment in the improvement of the overall appearance of the intersection which includes improved lighting, transportation services, street cleaning, building façades and greenspace (trees, grass, flowers).

#### Themes

The themes below provide greater context to the comments that were discussed during stakeholder interviews. Quotes are also included as captured during the interviews.

#### Feedback on what George Floyd Square represents:

- Hallowed land and a sacred space
- Unity in the community
- A place to pilgrimage
- Historical Black area
- A space to convene and gather
- Sense of belonging and community
- “The way in which people around the world recognize this space serves as a symbol for the work of racial justice and Black liberation.”
- “It’s sacrilegious, its hallowed ground, be cognizant of that.”

#### Safety concerns:

- Safety for pedestrians against both vehicle and bus traffic, there are no rules for the street.
- Concern for dangerous driving, heightened impact at times of daily gatherings, visits, and events that happen at the intersection - there is a lack of clarity for rules for the street/right of way.
- History of police violence, crime, and gang activity in the area in the past but some feel more unsafe now.
- Gunshots into businesses, carjackings, broken windows and assaults.
- Need for more lighting in the area and an expansion of the right of way.
- “I want the intersection to feel safe enough to bring my grandmother down there. Needs lighting, transportation service, the street needs cleaning, less graffiti.”

- “There was always crime in the area, but I felt safe with myself or with my kid going to the corner store. Now I no longer feel safe, the environment of those four corners changed”.
- “The area is known as “Dirty Thirty” because it's Crips/Bloods territory and that has not changed.”

**Vehicle access:**

- Some want the bus routes to go back to original routes at the 38th & Chicago intersection.
- Some want the bus route to be rerouted to Portland Ave or Park Ave.
- Some want no vehicle access and for the street to be opened to pedestrians and bikes only.
- “I have not driven through the intersection, out of respect. I know that it is open, but I take 42nd street. It doesn't feel right doing that.”
- “Engineers-- What can they do, what can't they do. I know they can find ways to re-route, for safety etc. Show us what it looks like. See a plan, you want this, but it may be a safety issue.”

**Design ideas:**

- Some want new investments like green space, art, lighting, and bike lanes.
- Some want everything at the intersection to be updated and for the updates to extend past 38th & Chicago - this includes repairs and cleaning.
- Some want the intersection to be untouched, and the current structures preserved - there are names etched in the pavement.
- Some want the roundabout and the fist sculpture to be permanent.
- “Keep the garden, the mural, put planters on the sidewalks, let people use them, give them materials and the tools they need, have the agency and autonomy to do something with that.”
- “The City removing the fists was premature, I have not driven through the space since then and I will not ever again.”
- “It needs to be like it was, open to driving. Now you can't park differently. Can it be opened a little wider like Portland Avenue or Park Avenue? Could it be a one-way?”

**Desired resources and investments:**

- Need for resources for people - many people in the area have critical and immediate needs.
- Need for information or opportunities for jobs on the project.
- Need for resources and protection for homeowners and property owners who may be impacted or inconvenienced due to construction.
- “The neighborhood organizations asked for a \$10M investment along the corridor, got pushback.”
- “Businesses are hurting, since George Floyd was murdered it seems to be for the tourists more than the community to come out to the neighborhood.”
- “Investment now, many people now have critical and immediate needs in the area. It seems like people have broken spirits, waiting to have something happen to deliver us.”

**Feedback on the 24 Demands of Justice:**

- Some feel the 24 Justice Demands need to be met and are in line with the resources that the community currently needs.

- Some feel the City needs to meet only the Demands that fall under its purview.
- Some feel the demands were not inclusive in their creation and do not represent the full community.
- Some feel the City should stand behind the demands and be more public around their support for them.
- Some feel there has not been much progress made on meeting the demands.
- “Pick one or two recommendations at the top, come out with support, say we want to see this as well. Stand behind them and be more public. “
- “The key demand of the 24 Demands for Justice is that the community is cared for and can support themselves. This is a food and water desert.”
- “Spoke to the neighbors, no one knew how many of the demands had been met. The City said all have been met except three.”

#### **Role of the City of Minneapolis:**

- Some want the City take charge and provide their expertise.
- Some want the City to take on a partnership role, not lead this work.
- Some want the City to step back and let community members and those already doing work at the intersection lead, some feel the City likes to be in control.
- “The City likes to be in control, and they have to work on that.”
- “Don't think it should be the City's reconstruction project: Community, Floyd family, George Floyd Global Memorial should be at the helm of how it moves forward, and the City underwrites it.”
- “They need to play a 100% role; the City is still going to be involved. We pay taxes!”

#### **Communication expectations:**

- Some want to know how much this project will cost and where the funding is coming from.
- Some want to know why this project is happening now.
- Some want to know what is possible with this project.
- Some want to know what this project does not include, so the expectations are managed.
- “What are the things that are currently moving, and can the community give feedback on that?”
- “Accountability, come back and tell them where you are, keep coming back, share info and responses.”
- “How much is the City budgeting for this”? Is it tax dollars or what? Is it money that was donated or what?”

#### **Future engagement:**

- Desire for a non-transactional relationship.
- Desire for community meetings, forums, opportunities where the community can hear from the City.
- Make the process anti-racist, centering Black voices, as well as voices of Indigenous people of color at every level.
- The City can pay for people to do the work and for facilitators- if they are not connected to people, just the process, that is a problem.
- The City must acknowledge the ways they have lost trust - willing to start conversations with acknowledging harm.
- Many have felt that they have not heard from the City or have had direct engagement from the City outside of the past survey, would like engagement and communication at every step of the process.
- Many did not hear about or care for the survey that the City sent out for the interim design.
- “The community should have a say on what happens to the land and area around them.”

- “The City needs to be practical and tactical; in a sequential way, healing others is not an institutions’ place.”
- “The City of Minneapolis should be hearing what community wants and putting the resources behind it- it’s gotta be led by community.”

**Examples of intersections and places that 38th & Chicago can use as inspiration:**

- Nicollet Ave (Nicollet Mall); Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Milwaukee Avenue Historic District; Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 3rd Street Promenade; Los Angeles, California
- Memorial to Survivors of Sexual Violence - Boom Island Park; Minneapolis, Minnesota

### 3.0 NEXT STEPS & FUTURE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

#### Listening Session Interviews

The Listening Session interviews will continue through the Spring of 2022, with interviews occurring periodically throughout the life of the project, as needed. The goal is to ensure the community is heard and that their perspective informs the engagement process throughout. The following engagement methods have been developed to ensure community stakeholders have an active role in the project.

#### Open House Meetings

At the first open house, project staff will introduce the project to the community, confirm the desired level of community engagement for the project, recap engagement heard to date, discuss, and gather feedback on project goals, scope, and approach, and provide options for the broader community to give input. Open house meetings will occur throughout the life of the project.

#### Focus Groups

Focus group meetings will be utilized for this project as well. The group makeup will consist of a diverse range of stakeholder groups that include youth, residents (homeowners and renters), business and property owners (commercial and landlords), and community elders. The purpose of the focus groups is to have small group discussions with stakeholders to collect and analyze various perspectives, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and points of view about the future of 38th and Chicago. The project team will use the information to further inform the project approach and potential intersection/area design ideas.

### **Learning Tables**

Learning Tables provide a place where community residents, stakeholders, and City staff can work in partnership to design the 38th and Chicago intersection to ensure community benefits. It's where a partnership is formed between the community and the project team to design the 38th and Chicago intersection while providing an organized approach for community input. Learning Tables will occur throughout the life of the project and will be focused on providing attendees with in-depth information about various topics concerning the project such as public space opportunities, green infrastructure, pedestrian-friendly design options, and other considerations the community feels are important.

### **Community Co-Creation Team**

An additional engagement method that is being explored is the composition of a community advisory group, currently referred to as the Community Co-creation Team (CCT). The CCT would be composed of community stakeholders who live and/or work within the 38th and Chicago intersection area and represent the broad interests of the community (homeowners, renters, faith leaders, community leaders, business and property owners, youth, and elders). The members of the CCT are expected to represent the perspectives of their organization/community and serve as a conduit for information to and from their organization/community. This group would meet monthly with the project team to provide input throughout the duration of the project and provide recommendations as design concepts are developed. The formation of this group and its responsibilities are still being defined and more information will be publicly shared when available.

## **4.0 QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

Questions and comments from the public will be accepted via phone, email, website form, written documentation, and in-person conversations. Other opportunities for input will occur via surveys, in-person events, and other methods. Relevant project information and communication channels will be maintained on the project website:

<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/projects/38th-chicago-ave/>