

memorandum

DATE: July 25, 2023
TO: Grosse Pointe Woods Planning Commission
FROM: Jill Bahm, Rose Kim, & Stephanie Osborn, Giffels Webster
SUBJECT: Master Plan Update Work Plan Discussion

Introduction

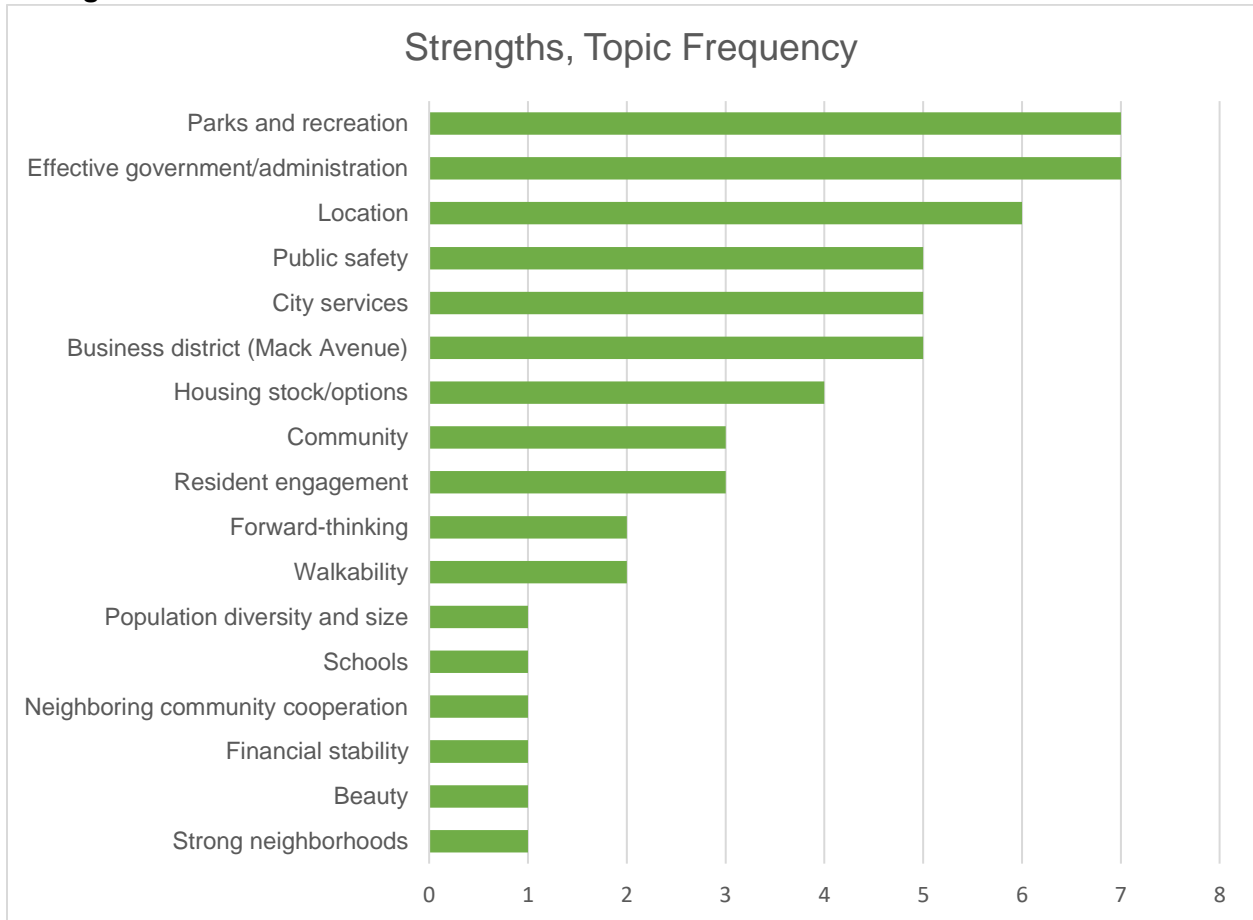
The Grosse Pointe Woods Master Plan update is now well underway and will soon culminate in a framework and guiding policy for land use and development in the City over the next 10-15 years. To wrap up Phase 1 of the planning process, we will review the input from the joint visioning session and use that to inform a review of the goals and objectives from your previous plan. Actions will be discussed in detail later in the process when the implementation plan is created.

This memo will recap the findings from the joint visioning session with the Planning Commission, City Council, and Staff from the visioning session in June, and the survey provided to the Planning Commission in advance of the July 31 meeting. It will also discuss key issues identified from this input, explain what goals, objectives, and action items are, and propose goals for this master plan.

Master Plan Visioning Session Recap

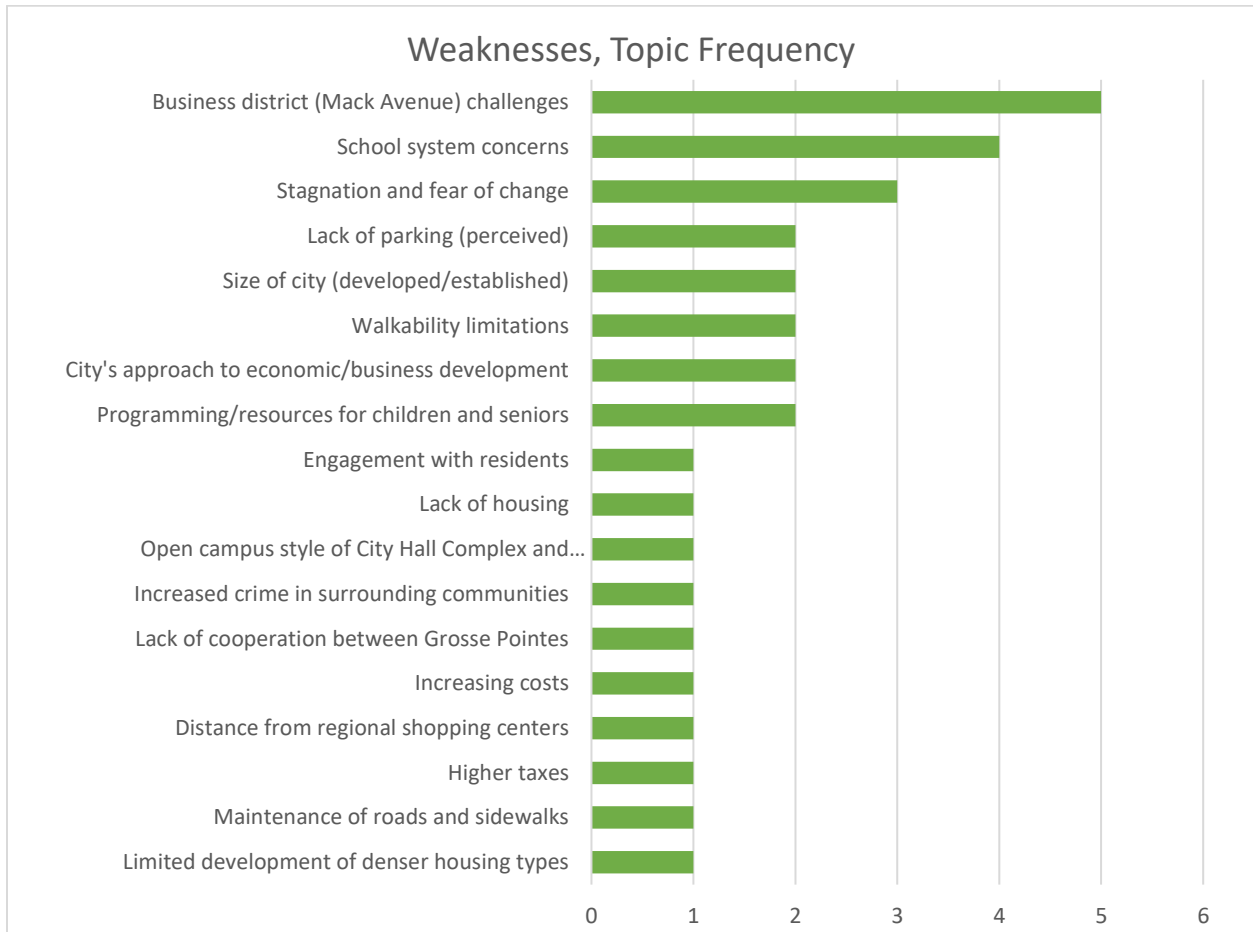
On June 19, the City Council and Planning Commission held a joint visioning session, discussed the city's strengths and weaknesses as identified by the participants, and prioritized foreseen opportunities and threats to the community (SWOT analysis). Below are the results of the SWOT analysis and discussion. The charts show the data that was collected through the survey prior to the visioning session which included 4 staff responses, 2 City Council member responses, and 7 Planning Commissioner responses. Additional discussion during the session is summarized in the paragraphs following the charts.

Strengths



Some participants noted that their survey responses focused on things that were within their sphere of influence, so some things such as schools, that are a strength of the community were not included in the response. **When reviewing the survey results, three additional strengths surfaced: 1) “community”, events, programming, and activities, 2) financial stability of the city, and 3) libraries.**

Weaknesses



In addition to the weaknesses noted in the survey responses, additional weaknesses discussed by the group include: **limited redevelopment opportunities and opportunities for property tax revenue growth; difficulties/challenges with the development review and permitting process; redundancies that exist between the Grosse Pointes; lack of movie theaters and other entertainment within the city, and a lack of activities and things for teens to do; and real estate values.**

Emerging Trends

The survey also asked respondents to identify any emerging trends in the nation, region, or community that could be influential on the master plan process. This list was added to during the visioning session. The complete list is below:

- Higher density, high-end living options
- Interest in aging in place and resulting lack of housing
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- Micromobility options (ebikes, scooters, etc.)
- 15-minute neighborhoods
- Food trucks, pocket parks
- Higher electricity demand/needs
- New electricity infrastructure for EV charging
- Solar energy, small and large scale
- Short term rentals
- Working from home
- Email becoming less utilized
- Smart Cities, artificial intelligence
- Pedestrian safety strategies
- Drugs
- Challenges for empty nesters/downsizing (cost, availability)
- Allowing 3 stories on Mack Ave – impact for new development
- Liggett School development – could there be more developers interested in these types of projects?
- Options for new families, schools
- School properties?
- 15-minute neighborhoods, social districts, walkability, things to do

Opportunities

Survey responses were grouped by category and then given to small mixed groups of planning commissioners and city council members. The groups then prioritized the opportunities as either high, medium, or low. All of the items considered to be high priority opportunities were listed and each participant was able to vote for their top three opportunities. Actions focused on economic development, particularly around Mack Avenue and housing were the top priorities. The results of that activity are shown below, with the items listed from highest to lowest priority, followed by the number of votes for each item included in parentheses.

1. **Enhance walkability** with better crosswalks (10 votes)
2. Encourage **mixed use development** by rethinking ordinances, recruiting/encouraging new economic strategies and development that can create mixed uses (7 votes)
 - At least four of the five groups noted that this was a high priority item
3. **Enhancements to Mack Ave** to make Grosse Pointe Woods more of a destination for residents and non-residents, such as façade improvements and business support (4 votes)
4. Enact and enforce ordinances to **maintain and improve the housing stock** in the city, keeping housing values up, increasing the tax base, and maintaining typical income level of residents (4 votes)
 - This was listed as a high priority by at least two groups, and a medium priority by at least one group. Flags and block parties were noted as additional strategies.

5. Explore **accessory dwelling units** in neighborhoods (3 votes)
6. Explore **streetscape improvements** such as landscaping in medians and adopt a garden (3 votes)
 - At least one group felt this was only medium priority
7. Maintain/expand **city social programming**, art fairs, music, sidewalk sales, and other active lifestyle elements (2 votes)
8. Explore **grants/funding** (1 vote)
9. **Improve schools** (1 vote)
10. Better **understand changing demographics** and address those specific needs
 - At least one group felt this was a low priority
11. Long-range planning of **recreational/community amenity development and maintenance** (1 vote)
 - At least one group felt that this was only medium priority
12. **Invest more in parks** (0 votes)
13. Consider a business development role and/or commission to **coordinate developers and commercial property owners to attract and retain targeted tenants** (0 votes)
14. Once a master plan vision is created, benchmark “peer” cities to **discern best practices** toward obtaining the vision (0 votes)
 - At least one group noted this as high priority.

There were five items suggested from the survey that were not considered high priority by any group. Those considered to be a medium priority by at least one group include reviewing the status of issues identified in the recent 2020 Plan, trying to develop a key business district in the city, and continuing to engage in meetings with other city managers to encourage partnerships and enhance parks and community members. Partnering with neighboring communities and developing an official Facebook presence to collect feedback/input from residents and promote events were considered to be a low priority.

Threats

A similar process to that described for opportunities was undertaken to prioritize threats. The threats mirrored the opportunities, with concerns about housing and economic development along Mack Avenue being in the top three concerns. The results of that exercise are below, in the same fashion.

1. **Lack of housing diversity/options** (11 votes)
2. Challenges faced by **aging populations** (8 votes)
3. Lack of diversity in business mix along Mack Ave (7 votes)
 - At least one group viewed this as a medium threat
4. Complacency/**not embracing change** (7 votes)
5. **Safety, crime, and drugs** (3 votes)

- At least one group viewed this as a medium threat
- 6. **Lack of support for new technologies** (EV chargers, solar panels, etc.) (1 vote)
 - At least one group viewed this as a high threat
- 7. **Reduced quality of schools** and resulting impacts (1 vote)
 - At least two groups viewed this as a medium threat
- 8. **Property maintenance** (0 votes)
- 9. **Inadequate, aging, or improperly placed infrastructure** (0 votes)
 - At least one group viewed this as a low threat
- 10. **Reduced tax revenue** (0 votes)
- 11. Increased **costs** (0 votes)
- 12. Change in **character of Mack Ave** (0 votes)
- 13. **Flooding** concerns (0 votes)
 - At least one group viewed this as a low threat

Review of PC Homework

Feedback from the survey responses provided by Planning Commissioners in preparation for this meeting include:

- Commissioners are generally open to a diverse array of housing types. However, some did not feel that triplexes, multiplexes, live-work options, cottage court homes, ADUs, and/or apartments would be appropriate anywhere in the city.
 - Some respondents noted that triplexes and multiplexes would be appropriate along Mack Avenue, Vernier Road, and in existing low-density neighborhoods.
 - Live-work options are thought to be most appropriate along Mack Ave.
 - Apartments and senior living facilities are thought to be most appropriate along Mack Ave and Vernier Road.
 - The Cook Road corridor was suggested as a possibility for non-single family housing types.
- Commissioners noted challenges of the existing transportation network, including being vehicle oriented and not pedestrian or bike friendly, difficulty in reaching community amenities without a vehicle, and the lack of routes and trips SMART buses take throughout the City.
- Commissioners felt that vehicles, bicycles, e-bikes, and walking would be the primary ways residents and visitors would want to access Mack Avenue. Scooters, the SMART bus, and a city-wide trolley were not desirable or deemed infeasible.
- Commissioners did not like the idea of having two ends of Mack Avenue focused on different types of amenities and felt that all amenity types should be available throughout the entire corridor. Additionally, it was suggested that the City take an active role in soliciting developers and businesses.

- Many City programs and services received a weighted score over 4, indicating that Commissioners felt they were either great or excellent. Cultural programs, support for new residents, and resources for seniors were rated to be average/okay. Commissioners were least satisfied with the City's support for developers and efforts in creating a sense of place.
- Most commissioners felt there were enough parks, but amenities such as a dog park, refrigerated ice rink, disc golf course, amphitheater, and additional picnic spaces were suggested.
- The ranking for the most concerning environmental issues was very mixed. Overall, the highest weighted score was for severe weather events, followed by flooding and water quality. Air pollution and extreme heat were ranked in the bottom half of options.
- The ranking for the most concerning social issues was also fairly mixed and close. Quality education ranked highest, followed by cost of living and crime. Food access, social isolation and loneliness, and drugs were ranked in the bottom half of options.

Issues to Consider

Based on the feedback from both surveys, discussions with the Planning Commission, City Council members, and staff, several key issues related to land use planning have been identified. They are as follows:

- Lack of housing options (type, size, location, affordability, ability to age in place)
- Lack of business mix and development along Mack Avenue
- Lack of connectivity throughout the City
- Vehicle-centric design/Lack of walkability along Mack Avenue
- Lack of community identity and character
- Barriers to people of all abilities living life to the fullest potential
- Climate change (severe weather and flooding, in particular); lack of sustainability and resiliency

Additional information about these issues is included in your packet and the content will be included in the report provided at the end of this phase.

What are Goals, Objectives, and Actions?

Goals – Where are we going?

If we think of the City's SWOT assessment, we can see some of the direction taking shape; what does that actually look like in terms of policy? Goals should set the community up for making land use decisions, modeling planning leadership and providing resources for implementation.

Objectives - How do we get there?

Objectives should be the general path to help the community achieve the goals. They will serve as the why for the action strategies that follow.

Actions - What do we need to do?

Actions are the specific things that need to be done to achieve the objectives and, ultimately, the goals. They will be aligned with the vision and guiding principles as well.

Actions will be developed after the focus area workshops. For now, the Planning Commission will focus on creating the goals and objectives.

Example Goal, Objective, and Action:

- **Goal:** The City of Grosse Pointe Woods will be defined by the bountiful tree canopy cover that softens the built environment, provides shade for climate protection and improves air quality.
- **Objective:** Require new development to preserve the greatest number of trees or plant new trees.
- **Action:** Refine the City's tree planting ordinance to include additional planting requirements for all landscape plans.

Grosse Pointe Woods 2006 Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives from the 2006 Master Plan are attached, along with the implementation item tracking spreadsheet showing what has been completed toward each goal. We have reviewed the goals and objectives in light of the feedback obtained from the Planning Commission, City Council, and staff. While the goals and objectives led to successful implementation, rewriting goals and objectives in light of best practices allows for the consolidation of goals and broader goal language. Several of the goals and objectives are no longer relevant, due to work that has been done to complete them, as evidenced in the implementation item tracking spreadsheet and/or changing needs and desires for the city. For all of these reasons, we propose starting with new goals. Those goals are proposed below.

Proposed Goals

The following goals have been created based on the input from Planning Commissioners, City Council members, and city staff, as well as goals from the 2006 plan, national trends, and planning best practices. These will be discussed at the July 31 meeting.

- **Housing:** Provide a range of housing choices for all ages, abilities, and incomes.
- **Economic Development:** Continue to work towards making Mack Avenue a vibrant commercial corridor that meets the daily needs of residents and visitors.
- **Transportation:** Enhance the entire transportation network to provide safe, convenient, and accessible transportation choices.
- **Community Character:** Strengthen sense of place, identity, and character throughout the city and its neighborhoods.
- **Resiliency:** Promote resiliency to create a more equitable and inclusive community.

Next Steps

The next step is to hold a public open house to gather feedback from the entire community on the proposed master plan goals and key issues. The Planning Commission will host the open house, with each member hosting a station. Things to consider in planning the open house include when to hold the event, how to publicize it, and what feedback is wanted from the community.

Following the open house, a report will be prepared containing the findings from the surveys, visioning session, and open house, and stating the goals and objectives for the plan.