

# West Main Street Multimodal Transportation and Placemaking Plan

Public Engagement Plan

*Draft – Not for Distribution*

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**HIGHLAND** PLANNING

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### Project Overview

As the western gateway to Center City and serving both local and regional transportation functions, West Main Street claims a central role in the economic and cultural life of the surrounding neighborhoods. The West Main Street Multimodal Transportation and Placemaking Study, seeks to create an actionable vision for West Main Street that reflects a revived multimodal, economic, and cultural corridor.

A strong foundation has been laid for this work. Fresh from the storytelling, goal setting, and celebration of community values that went into creating Rochester 2034, Reimagine RTS, the Comprehensive Access and Mobility Plan, and site-specific plans like the Bull's Head Urban Renewal Plan and the Susan B. Anthony House Strategic Plan, this project will focus on the broader transportation, economic, and cultural goals of the West Main Street community. In addition, recent public and private investment in the West Main Street corridor have brought a range of streetscape elements including modified sidewalks, period lighting, plantings, cultural accents, and small-scale development to the street. However, a legacy of disinvestment, redlining, and auto-centric planning and design perpetuates the perception of West Main Street as a space to move through instead of a place in its own right. The adjacent land uses along the street reflect this tension between pass-through and place—intermittent business clusters and street walls mix with off-street parking, vacant lots, and empty storefronts; a constrained pedestrian realm is divided by infrequent crossings and wide intersections that would otherwise serve as vital nodes; and transit amenities and bicycle accommodations along the street are sparse or nonexistent despite the high concentration of households without access to a car and some of the busiest RTS stops. Stalled attempts to invigorate West Main Street point to a need for a unified, community-built vision for the street, one that extends beyond a narrow focus on physical space to include social anchors and networks, community heritage and culture, and an equity-focused strategy for economic development.

### Decision Statement

A decision statement is used in a stakeholder and public engagement process to summarize the opportunity to be explored and the decision that will be made. The decision statement is intended to clarify the objective of the project. It will be used in press releases, at the start of public meetings, and in the final document. The decision statement for this project is:

*By the end of 2021, the project team will complete a study that explicitly shows an implementable vision for the corridor that reflects the desires and dreams of area residents and business owners.*

## Purpose of the Engagement Plan

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan was prepared using input from four key stakeholders and direction from the steering committee. The City of Rochester recognizes that a successful plan requires input from the most affected stakeholders. This Public Engagement Plan defines key stakeholders and engagement activities and outlines a schedule to engage stakeholders throughout the project. By publishing this document, the City of Rochester begins engagement with transparency. The plan is designed to be a living document with purposeful flexibility. It may evolve over the course of the project as the effectiveness of tools and techniques are evaluated. If necessary, the plan will be modified to better suit the project and broader community. Finally, this plan formalizes the commitment of the City of Rochester to help the West Main Street community coalesce around a shared vision for the corridor.

## COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic will impact how we conduct the project. Community engagement tools will need to account for ongoing social distancing requirements and restrictions on large gatherings. The project team understands that during NYS on PAUSE due to COVID-19, access to professional offices, libraries, community centers, and other public spaces will remain limited for the foreseeable future. Members of the public and stakeholders may not have access to reliable internet and/or computer equipment at home to allow video conferencing. Therefore, the virtual platforms and techniques in this plan include options for participants to join by phone-only or view materials presentations on their own time. Implementation of meetings identified in this plan may include both virtual and non-virtual techniques that do not rely solely on virtual platforms or in-person contact. As certain engagement activities will have to align with the sensitivity of the situation, this schedule will remain fluid throughout the project. We will also provide printed materials for review to be distributed through the mail and/or area businesses.

## Engagement Principles

Throughout the course of the project, the City will uphold the following stakeholder engagement principles:

- **Equity:** Whenever there is investment in a community, it creates wealth. However, this wealth has been historically restricted to those who have the social and monetary capital to take advantage of it. This engagement plan will put the community in a place to guide the investment back to the existing community, prevent displacement, and grow community wealth.
- **Co-creation:** A process of co-creation is one where the team of experts use their skills to help refine the ideas and strategies developed by the community, rather than the community sharing their input to refine strategies created by outside experts.
- **Accessibility:** An accessible process will ensure that a diverse group of stakeholders are engaged. Because we anticipate that much of the engagement will be virtual due to the

COVID pandemic, we will aim to make digital engagement ADA compliant. Interpretive services will be provided as needed or requested. For people without Internet access, we will provide an option for people to call into virtual meetings by phone. Within the context of safe COVID-19 practices, we will also seek opportunities for people to give input in writing or in person.

- **Agility:** Agility allows engagement to respond to changing circumstances. Individual elements of this plan may need to be adjusted as needed to meet community needs and ensure an equitable process.

## 2.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

### Background

In the context of public involvement, "risk" typically takes the form of public opposition and outrage, which can cause:

- Harm to a project's schedule, budget or overall viability
- Harm to the relationship between the City and the community

### Pre-Engagement Stakeholder Interviews

In October 2020, Highland Planning conducted four (4) pre-engagement interviews with community stakeholders. The purpose of pre-engagement interviews was to gain an understanding of how stakeholders are likely to perceive the project and what the likely issues will be. Pre-engagement interviews are an opportunity to begin developing constructive stakeholder relationships, better understand impacts, concerns, opportunities, and identify risks to the project. Pre-engagement interviews were completed with the following stakeholder:

- Dr. Campbell, City of Rochester Office of Community Wealth Building
- Bill Collins, Reconnect Rochester
- John DeMott, SW Street Liaison
- Calvin Eaton, 540 W. Main

Based on what we heard in these interviews, this PEP includes:

- A risk assessment related to the perceived tension between likelihood of implementation and a purely aspirational process, related to the existing lack of trust between the public and the city government.
- A stakeholder map showing the main community structures we've identified, giving us a sense of who to reach out to engage groups/communities in the area and avoid siloed conversations throughout the project lifetime.

- A plan for an internal process for determining how to use allocated budget to pay stakeholders.
- A system for melding virtual and in-person techniques to address digital divide issues.
- A charrette-like system for involving the public in co-creating the final design.
- A project website where transparent discussion between community members can take place.
- A process to align communications/messaging around identified shared community values, e.g. safety, community, convenience, beauty.

### Outrage Factors

Opposition and outrage originate from over twenty different factors\*. Our initial discussions with key stakeholders revealed that the outrage factors that apply most directly to this project, and therefore need to be addressed, are the following:

- **Fairness.** Does the process consider all aspects of the community in an equitable way, or does it prioritize certain groups above others? In an area with many stakeholders and separate resident groups, fairness is an important factor. Even more so when past projects have been perceived as unfair.
- **Process.** Does the process honor the Community? Does it listen and respond to community concerns? A study that purports to show the goals of the community must have a process the community can track and support.
- **Trustworthiness.** Can the City be trusted to support the neighborhood? Both the recent missteps of the City, and the failure of past efforts to invigorate W. Main, make trustworthiness an important factor.

\*Outrage factors adapted from *“Responding to Community Outrage: Strategies for Effective Risk Communication”*

### Risks

Based on our knowledge of the project and our interviews with stakeholders we identified two central risks, and developed mitigation strategies for each

**Risk 1:** Limited in-person engagement due to COVID-19 could lead to a lack of community ownership of the project, and a loss of community support for implementation. To mitigate this risk, we are:

- Beginning the process with two months of outreach to build our community connections,
- Using an iterative project structure, allowing us to engage in frequent back and forth discussions with the community and prevent gaps in communication.
- Using a permanent pop-up in a local storefront, allowing us to have a consistent physical presence in the corridor.

- Providing more opportunities to talk directly to the City and consultants one on one.

**Risk 2:** Incomplete implementation, or changes between design and implementation, could lead to outrage and a further loss of community trust. To mitigate this risk, we are:

- Educating the community on how projects are funded and built, who makes decisions, why decisions are made, etc...
- Leading with an implementation focus, including a phased implementation strategy with short, mid, and long-term actions and champions for each.
- Communicating clearly about the scope of engagement, surfacing constraints early, and connecting the conversation to real budget numbers where possible.
- Building neighborhood capacity to support and advocate for faithful implementation, through the creation of a process for future engagement of the committee and other community members involved in this process.

### 3.0 PROJECT TEAM

The project team consists of the City of Rochester and the project consultants, including members from Toole Design, Grayscale Collaborative, and Highland Planning.

**Toole Design:** Toole Design is the nation's leading planning, engineering, and landscape architecture firm specializing in public realm infrastructure for multimodal transportation. As a firm, their mission is to create livable communities where walking and bicycling are safe, convenient, and enjoyable for everyone. We focus on developing cost-effective and implementable solutions that move people efficiently while also improving health, quality of life, and economic vitality.

**Highland Planning:** Highland Planning's area of practice is community development, with an emphasis on public outreach, urban revitalization, and grant writing. Highland Planning's office is located in Rochester, NY. Highland Planning's public engagement philosophy is to tailor the public engagement process for each project, identify those most impacted by each project and provide specific outreach to those individuals, and ensure the process, is transparent to the public, always.

**Grayscale Collaborative:** As an architecture and urban design practice Grayscale Collaborative spatializes and rectifies social inequities through processes of radical inclusion and design intermediation. Their work acknowledges the intersectionality of race, class, and the production of space; interrogates design's contribution to, and complicity with, structural and infrastructural racism; and, develops research and design methodologies and interventions that address issues of equity, access, social justice, and precarity at the scales of infrastructure, communities, metropolitans, and the globe.

## 4.0 STEERING COMMITTEE

The City of Rochester convened a Steering Committee to guide the project and help ensure that the study addresses issues relevant to the stakeholders. The committee is composed of neighborhood leaders, business/property owners, agency representatives, and local nonprofits. The Committee will hold approximately one meeting each month. A list of the committee members is available at: <https://airtable.com/shrbvoRUmXNXcSTTt>

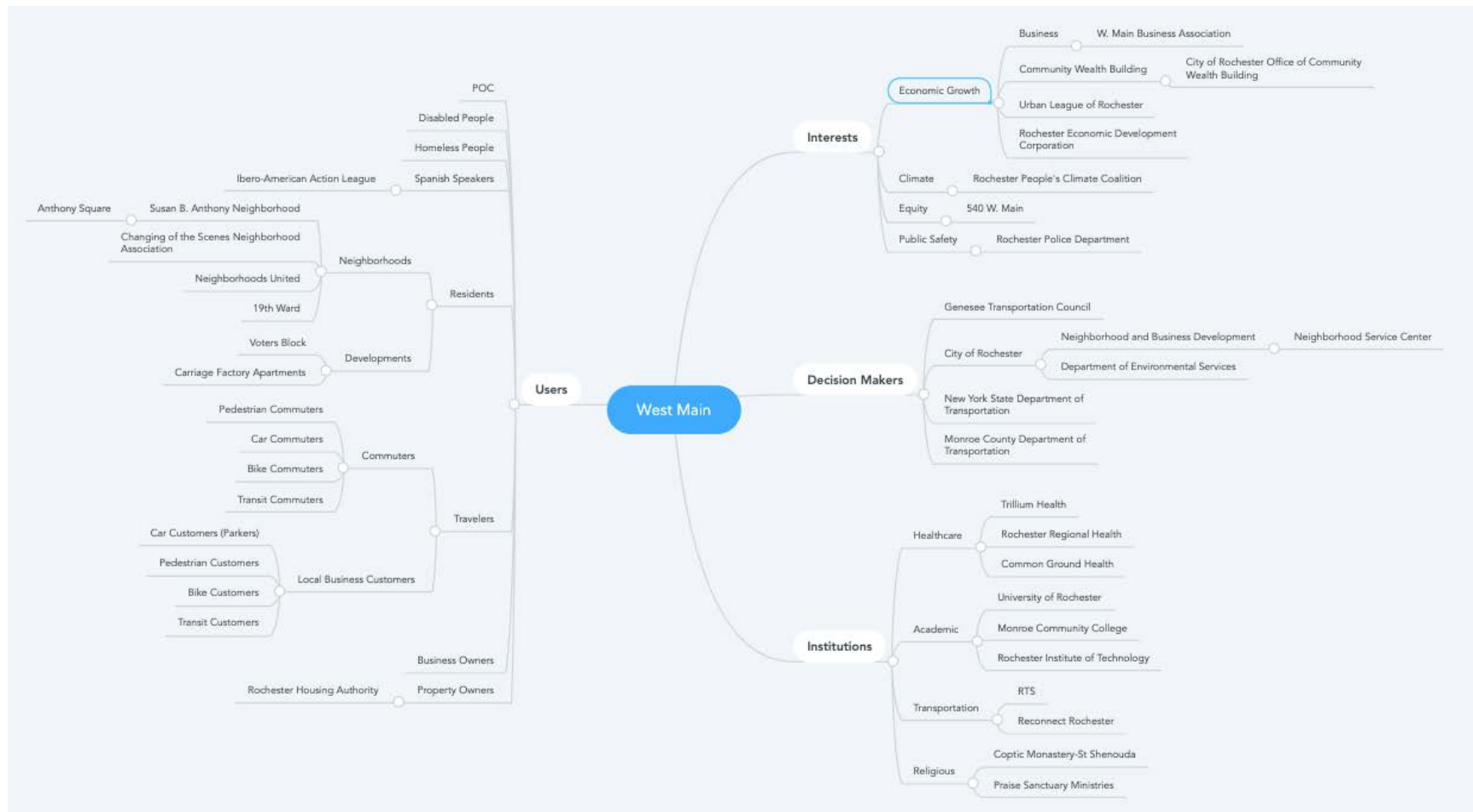
## 5.0 STAKEHOLDERS

With support from the members of steering committee, the project team will engage with the Community. The input and potential support they can provide will be critical to the project. All interested individuals will be emailed with updates and information on upcoming project events. The project team will also seek to collaborate with Community members who can help promote and expand the reach of the project.

Based on conversations among the project team and feedback received during the project kick-off meeting and the pre-engagement interviews, the stakeholders have been identified in the stakeholder map below.



## Public Engagement Plan



Note: the stakeholder map can be accessed at <https://mm.tt/1672152968?t=4GdEDSM7rl>.

## 6.0 ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS

Throughout the course of the project, the community will be engaged through a series of engagement activities, which will serve as an opportunity to develop constructive relationships and solicit meaningful feedback.

### Door-to-Door Outreach

At the outset of the project, Highland Planning will perform door-to-door outreach to (1) inform the community about the study and (2) gather contact information from those who would like to stay involved in the project. Possible materials to distribute during the outreach will include the frequently asked questions (FAQs) document, project brochure, and pop-up flyers.

### Steering Committee Meetings

City of Rochester will host monthly meetings with the steering committee members for the purpose of sharing project information and seeking direction on the project. Meeting subjects will align with the project phase/subphase. Steering Committee meetings will be held virtually until it is safe to convene in person again.

### Surveys

Highland Planning will develop up to ten (10) online surveys during the course of the project. The purpose of the surveys will be to solicit information about the current subphase, and will consist of less than 5 questions each survey. New surveys will be published the first week of each month. Survey subjects will align with the project phase/subphase. Survey results will be posted on the project website within a week of the close of the survey.

### Pop-Ups

Highland Planning will identify a location in the project area, preferably a café or other location with regular hours, to set up a pop-up booth for the duration of the project. The pop-up booth will provide an offline opportunity for the community to view the latest materials and submit their comments through a comment box or post-it board. The materials will be updated monthly and be staffed one day a month by a representative of the project team to answer questions and assist in providing feedback. During Subphase 3.2 the pop-up will be staffed for 3 days in a row, with members of the design team, who will conduct a charette-style activity with the pop-up attendees. Pop-up subjects will align with the project phase/subphase, and will mirror the survey.

### Project Ambassador Program

The project ambassador program will provide a mechanism for people who want to be more deeply involved with the project. Highland Planning will use the door to door outreach as well as digital outreach to identify people who might want to join the program, but any member of the public will be able to sign up through the project website. Project ambassadors will be placed in a separate email list from other project stakeholders. Through this email list they will receive a package of

materials approximately once a month. They will be asked to use these materials to share information with their neighbors, and sometimes collect feedback, which they will submit through an online form or via phone/in writing. The existence of these project ambassadors creates a framework for working with the community through implementation. Project ambassador materials will align with the project phase/subphase, and will mirror the survey and pop-ups.

### Live Virtual Q&A

Highland Planning will facilitate two live virtual Q&A sessions, in subphases 3.2 and 4.1. These sessions will be opportunities for the community to have their questions answered, so that they can provide more informed feedback through the survey and pop-up.

## 7.0 ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

### Phase 1: Awareness (November-December)

This Phase will be focused on making sure as many of the residents, business owners, and users of the West Main Street area know about the project as possible. It includes two subphases:

**1.1:** This subphase will be focused on introducing the project to the community and committee, and vetting the engagement plan and publicization strategy with the committee. We will also discuss the use of paid participation.

**1.2:** This subphase will be focused on finding project ambassadors, and publishing the project website.

### Phase 2: Community goal setting (January-March)

This phase will be focused on understanding what the community feels the goals of the project should be. It includes three subphases:

**2.1:** This subphase will be focused on the first iteration of the community goals, synthesized by the project team from previous planning efforts in the area, neighborhood organization mission statements, and other published material.

**2.2:** This subphase will be focused on discussing the second iteration of the community goals, developed through community feedback.

**2.3:** This subphase will be focused on presenting the final iteration of the community goals, and discussing the Existing Conditions and Needs Assessment (baseline conditions, multimodal analyses, and market profile).

### Phase 3: Co-creation of solutions for community goals (April-July)

This phase will be focused on working with the community to develop strategies to accomplish the project goals. It includes four subphases:

**3.1:** This subphase will be focused on discussing the high-level concepts, and policy/program/regulatory recommendations.

**3.2:** This subphase will be focused on developing the design alternatives through a charette-like process with the community.

**3.3:** This subphase will be focused on discussing the design alternatives, recommended strategies, and the land use and buildout scenarios.

**3.4:** This subphase will be focused on discussing updated the land use and buildout scenarios and the multimodal corridor concepts.

### Phase 4: Draft and final report development (August-September)

This phase will be focused on vetting the report with the committee and the community. It includes two subphases:

**4.1:** This subphase will be focused on presenting the Draft Report and implementation plan for final edits.

**4.2:** This subphase will be focused on presenting the Final Report and implementation plan, and discussing the process for community involvement in implementation.

## Alignment of Phases and Subphases with Engagement Actions

Month	Phase	Subphase	Committee Meetings	Surveys	Pop-Ups	Project Ambassador Materials
November	Phase 1	1.1	#1			
December		1.2	#2	#1		#1
January	Phase 2	2.1	#3	#2	#1	#2
February		2.2	#4	#3	#2	#3
March		2.3	#5	#4	#3	#4
April	Phase 3	3.1	#6	#5	#4	#5
May		3.2	#7	#6	#5	#6
June		3.3	#8	#7	#6	#7
July		3.4	#9	#8	#7	#8
August	Phase 4	4.1	#10	#9	#8	#9
September		4.2	#11	#10	#9	#10

## 8.0 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

### Project Website

To enhance the reach and transparency of the public outreach for this project, Highland Planning will develop a project website allowing us to keep the community informed of the project's progress and gather their input. Site content will include:

- Surveys
- Meeting Livestreams
- Project FAQ
- Project Signup
- Project Ambassador Signup
- Meeting materials/minutes
- Project materials/documents

### Public Input database

**Stakeholder Database:** Highland Planning will use Airtable to maintain a database of all interested stakeholders with their addresses, email and other contact information. The project website will host a subscribe feature to allow stakeholders to join the contact list. The database will be used to facilitate e-blasts, mailings and other communication. Committee members will also be able to add contacts using the subscribe feature on the project website or provide contact information in an Excel/spreadsheet format to Highland Planning.

**Comment Log:** Highland Planning will keep a continuous log of all community and stakeholder engagement activities and input received in the database. The name and contact information of the commenter will be included when possible, preferably email address but phone number, home address or preferred major social media platform will be included if email is unavailable. Comments will then be categorized and kept on record.

### Communication Materials

Highland Planning will assist the team in developing the below-mentioned communications materials and content to inform the public about the project and solicit feedback.

- Press releases
- Project Website
- Project Brochure
- FAQ document
- Flyers
- Digital copies of the flyer and brochure for City website and/or social media
- Social media/website content (as needed)

- Phone calls to stakeholders (where needed)

### Survey and Event Outreach Approach

Given that there are multiple target audiences, as shown in the Stakeholder Map, the project will be promoted using a variety of methods to gather input from a balanced cross-section of the community. Techniques include:

**News Media Outreach:** Press releases to share information on the project with local news media outlets.

**Website:** A link to the project website will be placed on the City website. Links to surveys and background material will be available on the website, as will a place to sign up for email alerts.

**Social Media:** Promotion through Facebook, including social media posts to the City's social media accounts, as well as a variety of community social media accounts and the accounts of steering committee members and project ambassadors.

**Emails:** Email blasts to various email lists, including contacts collected through the door to door outreach and contacts provided by committee members.