

Summary Memo

Round 1 of Public Engagement

April 2022

This document summarizes the first round of public engagement for Choose Chillicothe, which was conducted between March 22 through April 19, 2022. Input was gathered in the following ways:

- **In-person events** – Three “Let’s Chat!” Chillicothe evening meetings were held on March 22 and April 19.
- **Virtual workshops** – Online meeting workshops took place on March 24 and March 31 during the evening and afternoon to accommodate various schedules.
- **Online engagement** – Mapping activities and survey questions were available online throughout the duration of the first round of engagement.
- **Meeting-in-a-box** – Boxes containing meeting materials and activities conducted at in-person and online workshops were handed out to groups who were unable to attend to complete on their own time.
- **Voicemail** – A voice messaging mailbox was created for individuals to share their thoughts anytime from March 22 to April 19.

The memo includes the following:

1. Purpose
2. Outreach and Publicity
3. Approach
4. Results
5. Participation Demographics

1. Purpose

The City of Chillicothe launched a process to develop a comprehensive plan in December 2021, called Choose Chillicothe. The City’s last comprehensive plan was adopted in 1948. One of the key inputs to the process is insight from the community. Through the first round of public engagement, multiple opportunities were designed to provide a platform for anyone who cares about the future of Chillicothe to help inform the plan. The engagement lays the groundwork for development of the plan’s preliminary goals, objectives, and recommendations as well as its future character and land use plan.

“I love Chillicothe and would love to see it grow prosper!”

-Engagement participant

2. Outreach and Publicity

Extensive outreach was conducted to spread the word broadly about the opportunity to participate in the public engagement opportunities. The Team capitalized on existing networks through community groups, organizations, churches, educational institutions, and local governments for outreach. The Choose Chillicothe Steering Committee played a vital role in spreading the word and relaying the importance of this opportunity to their own friends, families, coworkers, and neighbors. A press release was distributed to local media outlets, a website news post announced the engagement opportunities, and interviews with key stakeholder groups were conducted during this phase (documented separately). Outreach efforts included the following:

- Various groups and organizations connected to overarching networks were leveraged and contacted including civic associations, local government, schools, and many more.
- Emails and announcements were sent to community members outlining engagement opportunities and way to participate within the plan.
- Utilized the City's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts to promote events, which attracted over 31,000 views on Facebook alone.
- Over 2,500 rack cards were distributed throughout the city to locations including the public library, Chillicothe Railroad Museum, the YMCA of Ross County, Chillicothe City Schools, restaurants, and many others.
- Media outlets including the Chillicothe Gazette and City of Chillicothe Ohio website were reached.

3. Approach

Let's Chat! Chillicothe engagement round one included multiple parts.

In-Person & Online Workshops

Five public workshops were held on March 22 (2), March 24, March 31, and April 19 at various times throughout the day, either in-person or via Zoom, to maximize opportunities for folks to engage. These workshops began with an overview presentation about the planning process and importance of this opportunity for the city. Existing conditions were presented in the form of a game show, Did You Know? In which tables worked together to learn about their community and have a little competition. Participants were then asked to respond to a few open-ended questions and mapping activities to share their big ideas about the future of Chillicothe. All activities were facilitated by a member of the consultant team to provide guidance and insight.

Ideas for the future features two questions: **1)** What are the greatest opportunities for the City of Chillicothe? and **2)** What kind of change would you like to see or not like to see in the future? Participants were asked to individually reflect and then share their thoughts with their small group.

The mapping exercise asked participants to identify specific locations and places that are assets to Chillicothe and opportunities for the future on a physical map and explain why these areas were selected. An opportunity area could be a place that should be improved or enhanced, and an asset could be a place that is already serving the community and the surrounding jurisdiction well.

Online Engagement

The public workshop activities were mimicked for online engagement opportunities features on the Choose Chillicothe website to accommodate those who were unavailable during public meeting times. These included the ideas for the future activity along with the assets and opportunities mapping, available throughout the duration of the first round of engagement at www.ChooseChillicothe.com.

Meeting-In-A-Box

Meeting-in-a-box kits were handed out to groups who were unable to make it to the regularly scheduled meetings. These provided a convenient yet engaging way for individuals to interact through activities that also mimicked those from public workshops, including ideas for the future and an exit questionnaire. Information about existing conditions of the city and answers to frequently asked questions were found in individual participant packets to aid with clarity and understanding of the process. Steering committee members and stakeholders were given these boxes to share and complete within small groups for maximum accommodation.

“I care about this great community.”

-Engagement participant

4. Results

This section summarizes the input collected. It includes information from each online and public workshop, along with virtual responses from the online mapping activity.

Part 1: Open-ended questions

The following section includes major themes and ideas provided in response to the following questions:

1. What are the greatest opportunities for the future of Chillicothe?
2. What kinds of change would you like to see, or not to see?

These responses were compiled through each in-person event and online workshop and is organized around themes and sub-topics. Percentages in parentheses indicate what proportion of comments collected related to the topic.

What are the greatest opportunities for the future of Chillicothe?

Business/Job Opportunity (12.5% of total comments)

- Residents highlighted economic development through small business expansion and attracting new industries as areas of high opportunity within the coming years.
- The community values job expansion and a diversified local economy.
- Over 7.4% of total responses mentioned economic development pertaining specifically to the downtown region, which is experiencing strong growth, investment, and expansion.

Tourism, Culture & History (12.2% of total comments)

- Almost 6% of all comments mentioned the importance that the World Heritage Site will have on enhancing Chillicothe's tourism and the opportunities surrounding it.
- Increasing hotel and Airbnb services are desired by residents to enhance this sector.

Education Enhancements (6.9% of total comments)

- 3.7% of comments highlighted opportunities relating to growth and expansion of educational institutions such as Ohio University Chillicothe.
- Respondents want to see new educational developments and enhanced opportunity overall.

Health & Safety Expansion (5.8% of total comments)

- Improved and modern healthcare systems along with more options and resources in general were mentioned to be an important opportunity.
- There is a need for trauma and mental health resources, drug rehabilitation centers, and healthcare accessibility to all areas of the City.

What kinds of change would you like to see or not see in the future?

Road Infrastructure Improvement & Investment (19% of total comments)

- 10.5% of responses want to see road infrastructure fixes, such as traffic light improvements, more roundabouts, and re-painting.
- Parking/parking garage availability was a topic that 5.6% of participants mentioned concerning infrastructure.
- Public transit, bike lanes, bike paths, and sidewalks need enhancement.

Redevelopment Opportunity (9.8% of total comments)

- Redevelopment in the East End, Bridge Street, Western Avenue and Riverside were mentioned to be key areas of opportunity and improvement, compiling about 4.9% of responses.
- Commercial redevelopment, office buildings, hotels, retailers, grocery stores, and town centers are all redevelopments in which participants would like to see in the coming years.

Preserving Culture & History with Growth (8.4% of total comments)

- Many participants (4.2%) want to preserve Chillicothe's historic feel along with growth and development.
- Plan for oncoming tourism by investing in cultural assets such as Adena Mansion and the World Heritage Site.

Parks & Public Space (7.0% of total comments)

- Chillicothe's access to natural greenspace and parks was a reoccurring topic mentioned throughout the engagement process.
- Creating more outdoor events and opportunities to connect with the community is something that participants would like to see in Chillicothe's future.

Miscellaneous

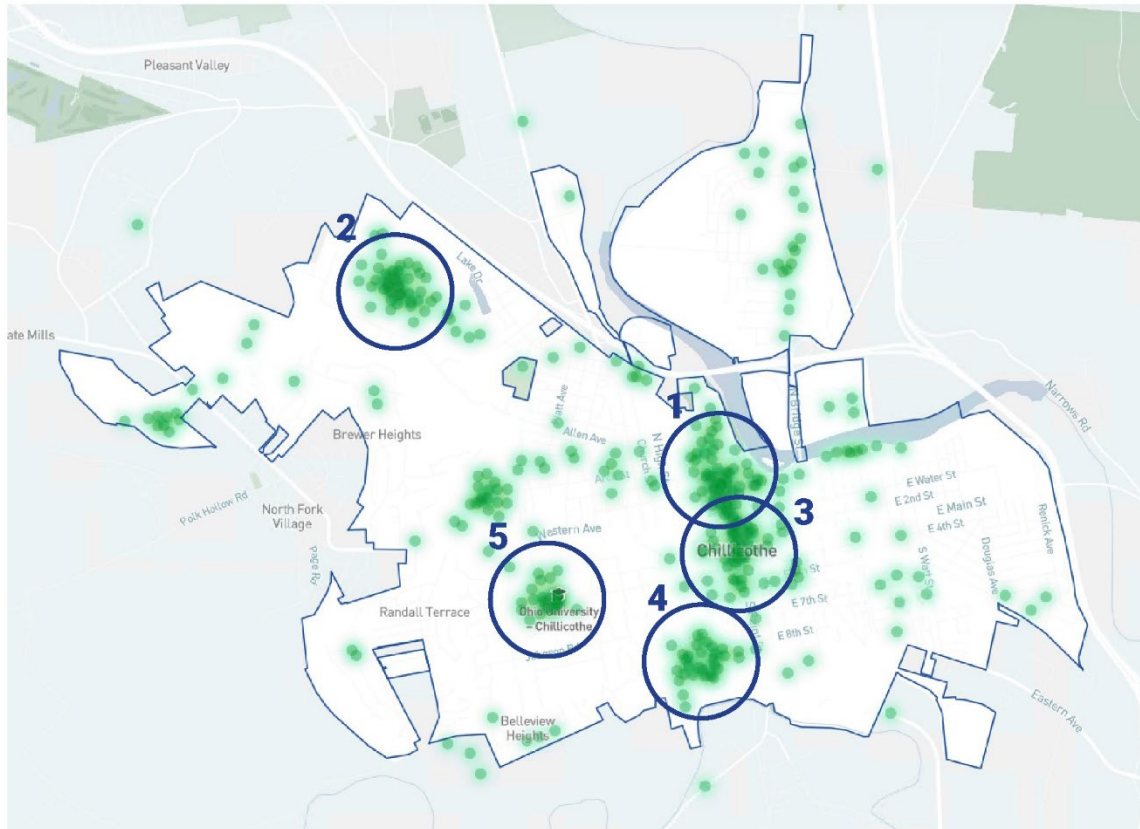
- About 6.3% of participants commented about Chillicothe's housing stock growing to accommodate more people at an affordable price.
- Traffic improvements to decrease congestion need to be accounted for.
- Preserving the downtown area while increasing economic development are important components of growth and development for participants.

Part 2: Assets and Opportunities Mapping

Below is a summary of key themes that emerged from mapping activities done at both in-person and online workshops via the Choose Chillicothe website.

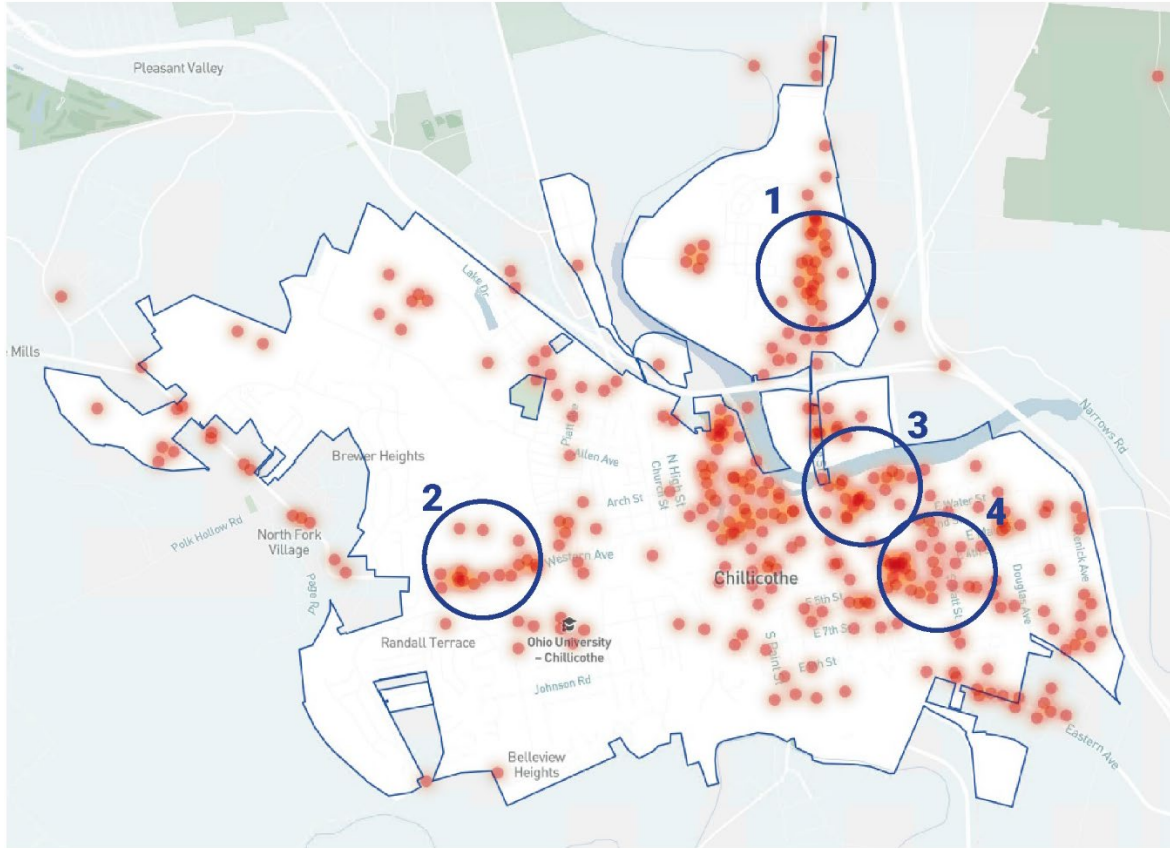
An asset was defined as a place that is already serving the community and the surrounding jurisdiction well, is attractive and represents a place to potentially be emulated. An opportunity area was defined as a place that could be improved or enhanced.

Identified Assets:



1. Yoctangee Park
 - Almost one-third of participants identified Yoctangee Park as being a major asset for the City due to its recreational opportunities, festivals, and family-centered atmosphere.
2. Adena Mansion & Gardens
 - This historic mansion provides a major hub of tourism, educational opportunity, beauty, and recreation.
3. Downtown
 - Downtown Chillicothe is home to exciting new restaurants and local businesses that attract residents and tourists alike.
4. Grandview Cemetery
 - Overlooking the City, this cemetery offers a walkable area full of beautiful views and history for residents to enjoy.
5. Ohio University Chillicothe
 - This institution provides great higher-educational opportunities for this area.

Identified Opportunities:



1. North Bridge Street
 - This gateway to the City has plenty of opportunity for expansion but needs attention to alleviate traffic congestion.
2. Western Avenue
 - Abundant opportunities for business development are present along this corridor that lacks access due to traffic patterns and outdated infrastructure.
3. Riverside Area
 - Described as being a ‘blank canvas,’ this area was identified to be underutilized and needs development to include recreational opportunities, housing, festivals, and more.
4. East End Chillicothe
 - This area has been identified as being ‘run down,’ ‘vacant’ and ‘aging,’ showing the opportunity for new investment and development opportunities through revitalization.

“We are so proud of how our downtown has been growing and we are so excited that there are initiatives in place.”

-Engagement participant

5. Participation and Satisfaction

The Let's Chat! Chillicothe in-person workshops engaged over 100 individuals and approximately 3,250 webpage views from over 1,130 unique visitors were collected during the engagement period, which met high expectations for the process. Over 650 assets and opportunities within the City were identified through in-person workshops and the online mapping activity.

All participants, including those who filled out the online activities, were asked to complete an exit questionnaire about their experience and themselves. The following insight is based on responses to the questionnaire.

Key Takeaways regarding participation and satisfaction

- 34.6% of participants heard about Let's Chat! Chillicothe via word of mouth.
- 35.4% of respondents noted they were referred to the engagement activities via social media.
- Email, online news, and the City website accounted for 22% of referrals.
- 56% of those who completed the exit questionnaire were female.
- 78% of respondents were White, with about 13% being Black or African American which matched the City's demographics by race very evenly.
- 81% of respondents were 35 years or older, with 14% between 15-24 years old.
- Individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher comprised 56% of total respondents.
- Almost 80% of respondents live within City limits of Chillicothe. 75% of them either work or are retired within the City.
- Many people felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and thought that the workshops were appropriately arranged – "I enjoyed collaborating with others in the community - it feels good to have a voice," said one survey participant.

Largely, participation was comprised of older and educated people who have lived in the City for more than a decade. Although a strong amount of those between 15-24 years old responded in the first round, participation of younger individuals will be an emphasis for future engagement.

6. Next Steps

Following this public input opportunity, analysis in key technical areas will be undertaken to further the planning team's understanding of certain relevant topics to the plan. That work will be considered in combination with community insight to inform the plan's recommendations.

7. Appendix

Attached is a copy of the comment database containing all participants' feedback to the engagement activities, as provided in their own words.

