Steering Committee Meetings

The Plans Steering Committee (PSC) plays a pivotal role in the development of the Comprehensive Plan, as well as the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails (PROST) and Downtown Plans. The PSC works to ensure City staff and consultants are in close alignment with the community's needs and vision, as gathered during various opportunities for public input and feedback. The PSC not only provides guidance but also shapes the general vision for the plan, offering insights into effective community engagement strategies. By leveraging their expertise and taking into account public input, the PSC is integral to both the process and development of plan recommendations. Apart from the consultants and City staff who form the "primary" project team, the PSC members are the individuals most closely involved in the process.

The following members were appointed to the Plans Steering Committee (PSC):

- City of Harlingen Mayor Norma Sepulveda
- City Commission: Ford Kinsley (District 1) and Daniel Lopez (District 2)
- Planning and Zoning Commission: Luis Villarreal and Sergio Perez
- Parks and Recreation Board: Adele Clinton-Solis and Diana Esparza
- Downtown Advisory Board: Lars Keim and John Pearcy

The Steering Committee conducted three meetings at Harlingen City Hall during the process, which were open for public observation. Each session reviewed the progress of each plan, public input received and requested feedback on draft deliverables to lay the groundwork for future recommendations. The meetings centered on the following topics:

- Kickoff and Data Analysis
- Public Engagement Plan
- Community Feedback
- Vision and Goals
- Draft Deliverables
- Plan Implementation



PSC Meeting (November 19, 2024)

Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder discussions help the consultant team and City staff gain a deeper understanding of various topics and contexts within Harlingen. These conversations can provide expert insights on specific subjects or address the needs of particular resident groups. Through initial discussions and analysis, the project team identified key topics and recurring themes of importance. Stakeholder conversations were conducted as group meetings either online or in person at Harlingen City Hall.

There were 10 stakeholder conversations during the plan's development. These conversations occurred concurrently while developing the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails (PROST) Plan and the Downtown Plan. The stakeholder groups engaged during the process provided general guidance and a deeper understanding of community needs while also providing technical feedback for specific recommendations. These stakeholder groups included:

- Non-Profits and Community Groups
- Small Business Owners (x2)
- Real Estate and Development
- The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV)
- Downtown Business Owners
- Youth Organizations
- Medical Sector



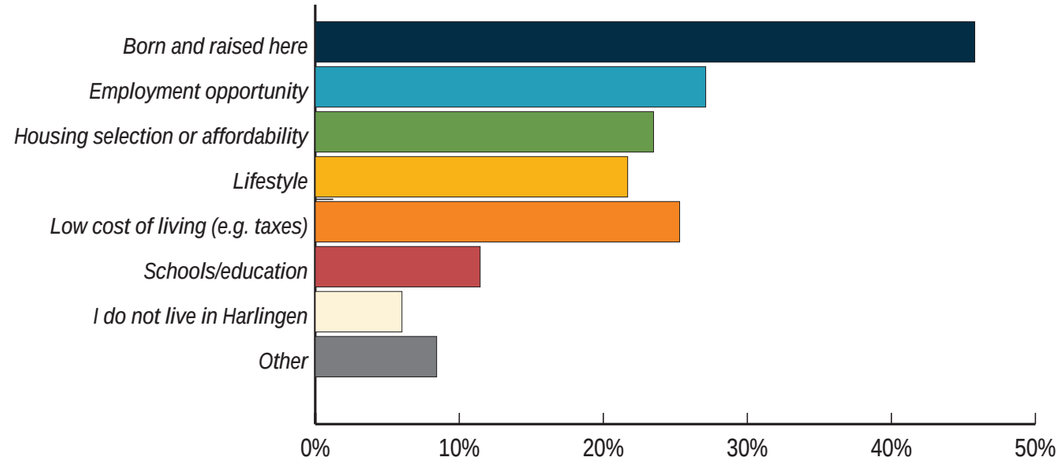
Non-Profit and Commuity Groups Stakeholder Discussion


Real Estate and Development Stakeholder Discussion

Comprehensive Plan Community Survey Responses

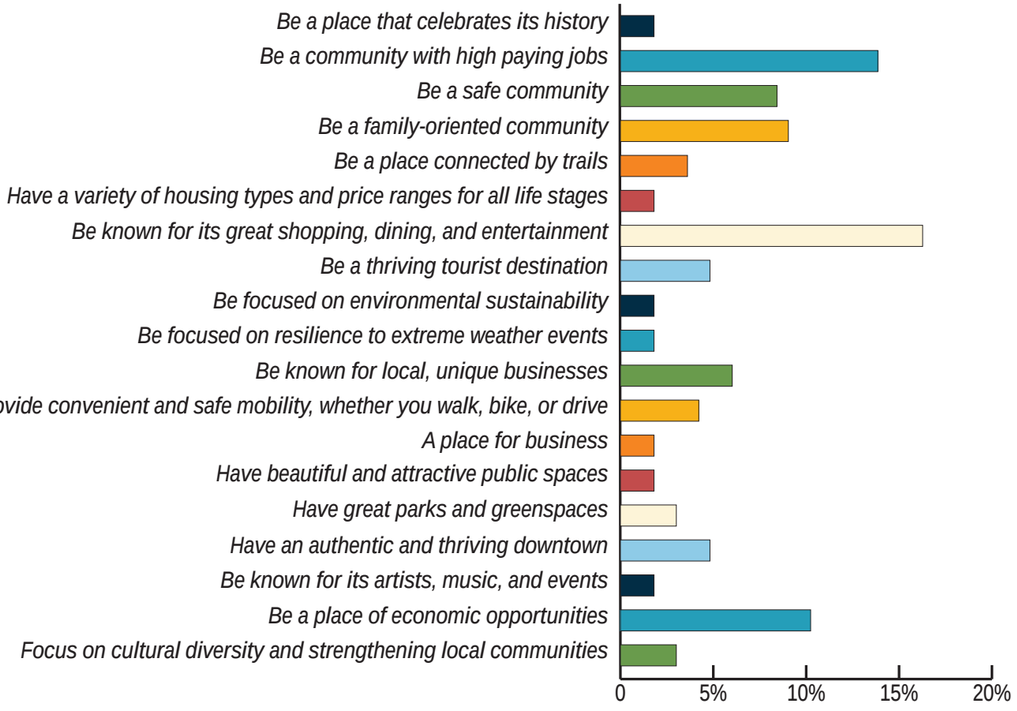
From October 30, 2024, to February 8, 2025, an online community survey was hosted on the Harlingen project website. Open to all, the survey featured translation tools to accommodate multiple languages and was accessible on both desktop and mobile devices. Outreach efforts to promote participation in the online survey included distributing flyers, promoting the survey on the local news and sharing information through the City's social media platforms. The survey received 166 responses while it was available to the public, and below is a summary of the public feedback received. This survey, as well as insights from public engagement events and stakeholder groups, provided the project team with essential baseline data and community priorities to guide the project's development.

Question 1. What is your primary reason for choosing to live in Harlingen?



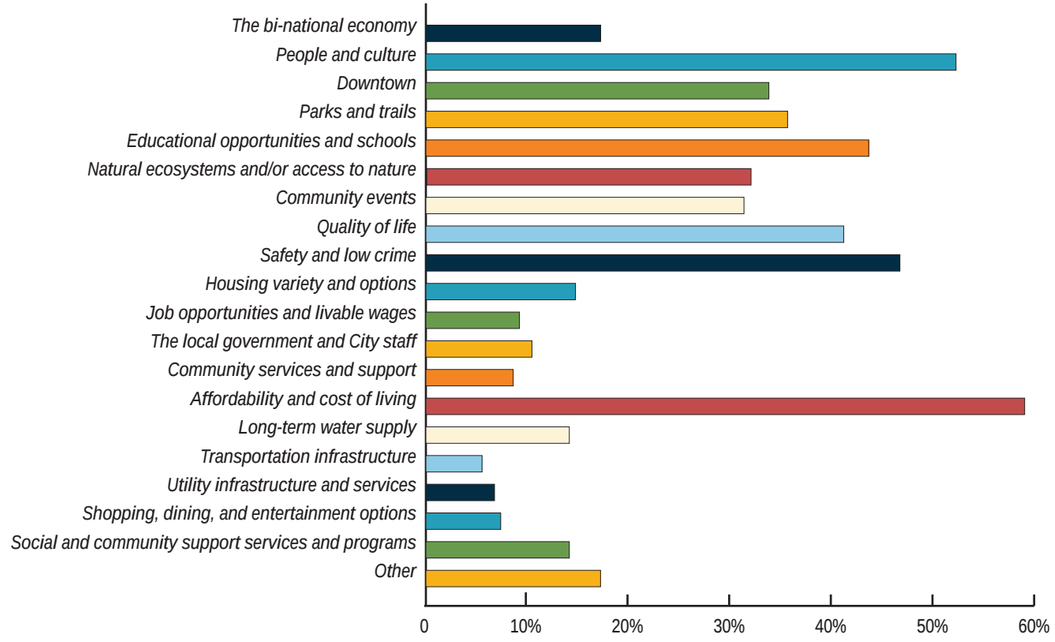
The main reason respondents gave for living in Harlingen is that they were born and raised here (45.78%); however, many were drawn to the City for economic reasons such as employment opportunities (27.11%), the low cost of living (25.3%), and affordable housing selection (23.49%).

Question 2. In the future, I want Harlingen to:



When asked what they want to see from Harlingen in the future, most responses related to the local economy. The primary response was that the City should be known for its great shopping, dining, and entertainment (16.27%). Respondents also want Harlingen to be a community with high-paying jobs (13.86%) and a place of economic activity (10.24%).

Question 3. In your opinion, what are Harlingen's greatest strengths? What differentiates it from any other city?

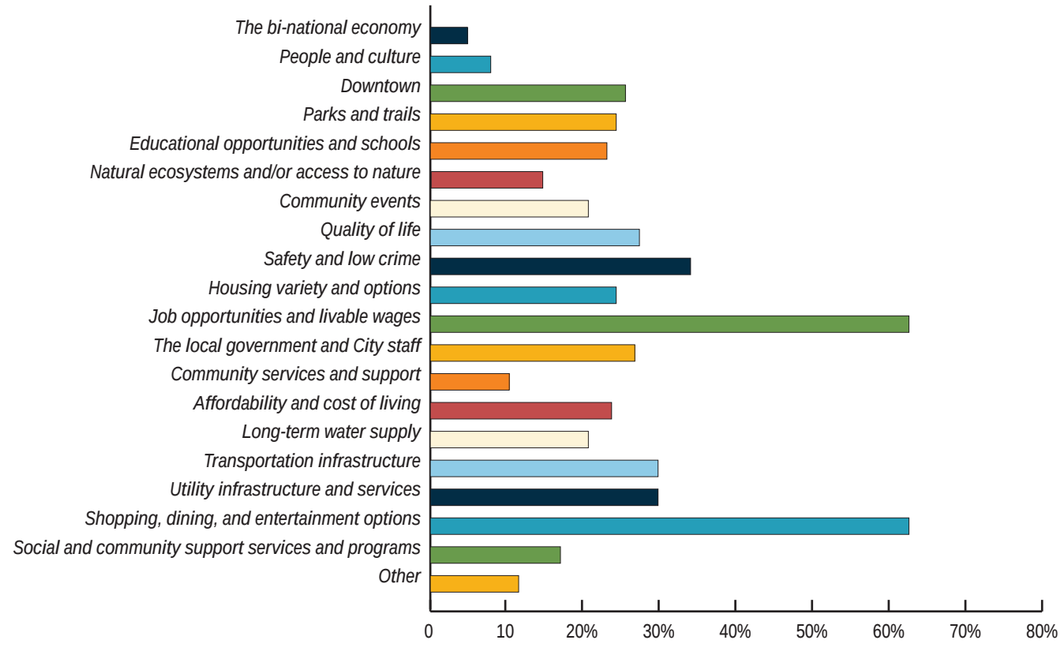


For most respondents, Harlingen's greatest strength is its affordability and low cost of living (58.9%). Harlingen's people and culture distinguish it from other cities (52.15%). Other strengths that set Harlingen apart include the City's educational opportunities (43.56%), public safety (46.63%), and quality of life (41.1%)

Question 4. If you would like to provide additional thoughts or clarifications on Harlingen's strengths, please provide those here.



Question 5. In your opinion, what are Harlingen's most critical issues?

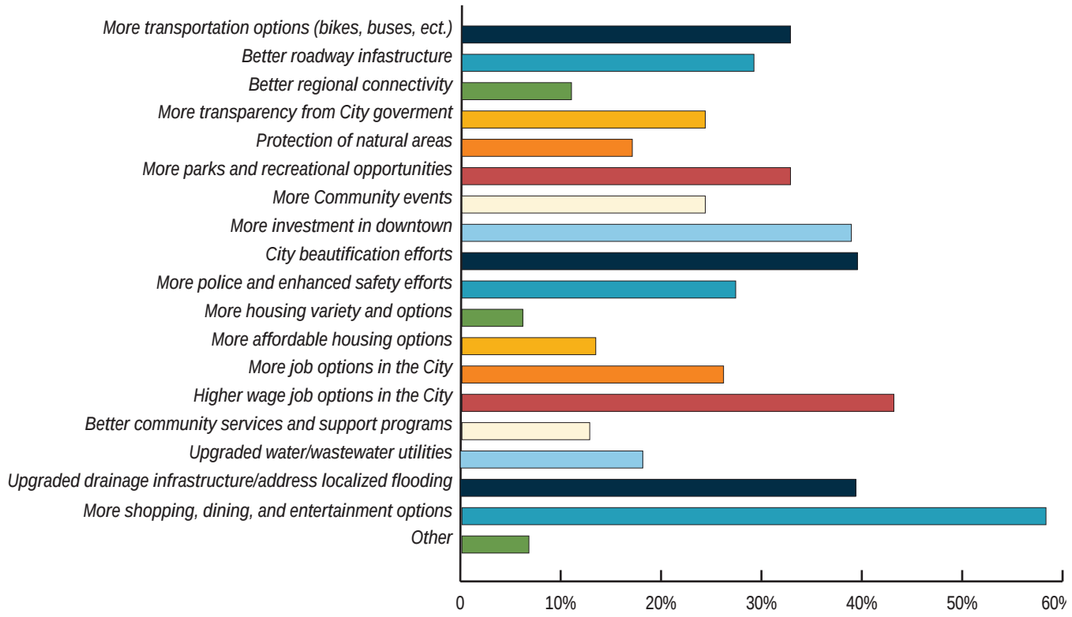


According to respondents, the most critical issues facing the City of Harlingen are job opportunities and livable wages and shopping, dining, and entertainment options; 62.42% of respondents chose both options. In comparison, things like the binational economy, people and culture, community services, and social support programs are among the least pressing issues.

Question 6. If you would like to provide additional thoughts or clarifications on Harlingen's critical issues, please provide those here.

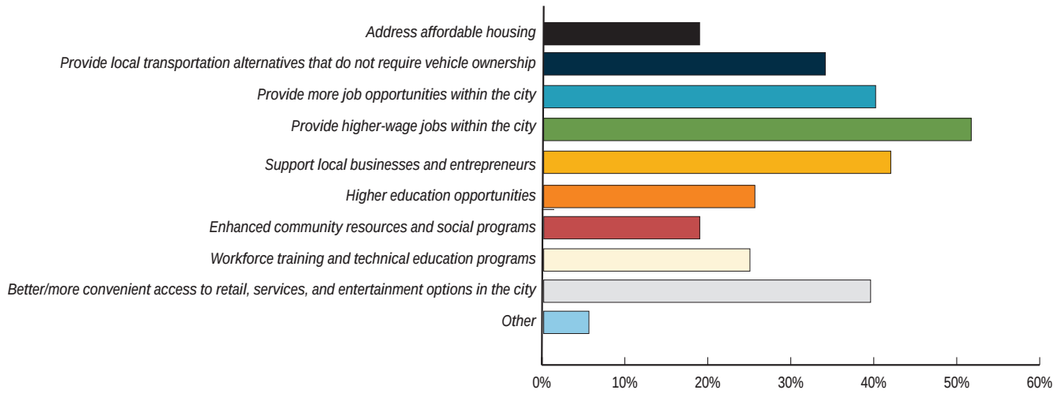


Question 7. What about Harlingen would you like to see change or improve?



More than half of respondents (58.18%) want to see more shopping, dining, and entertainment options in Harlingen. The second most significant change identified by respondents is higher-wage job options in the City (43.03%). Other improvements identified by respondents include City beautification efforts (39.39%), upgraded drainage infrastructure to address local flooding (39.39%), and more investment in downtown (38.79%).

Question 8. In your opinion, what strategies would be most helpful in supporting all Harlingen residents to thrive and prosper in our community?

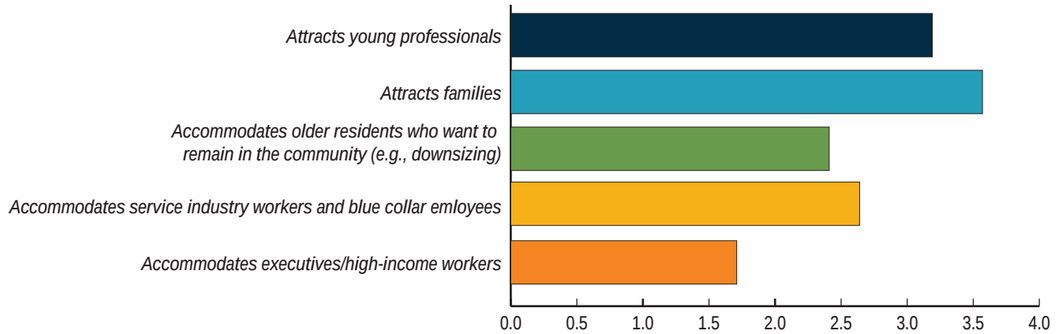


For over half of respondents, the best strategy to support Harlingen residents is to provide higher-paying jobs (51.52%). This is followed by supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs (41.82%), providing more job opportunities (40%), and providing more convenient access to retail, services, and entertainment options in the City (39.39%). Initiatives to boost the local economy will help the whole community prosper.

Question 9. If you could do one big thing to make Harlingen the best place it could be, what would that be?

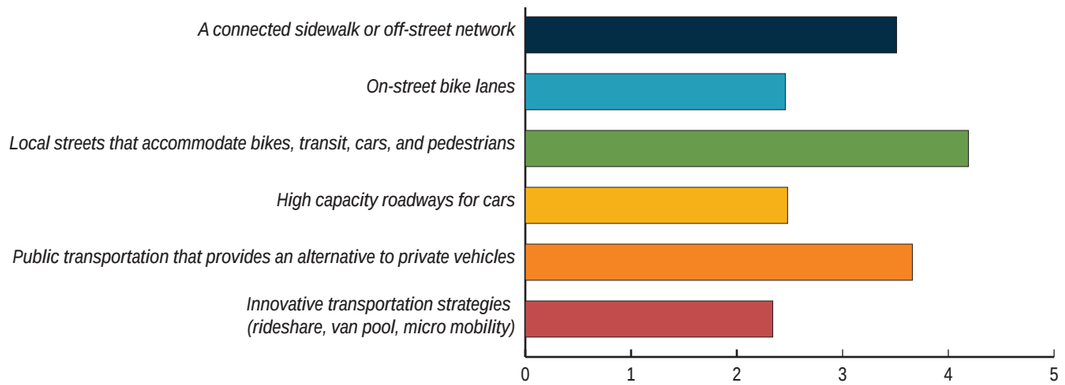


Question 10. In the future, Harlingen should focus on housing that:



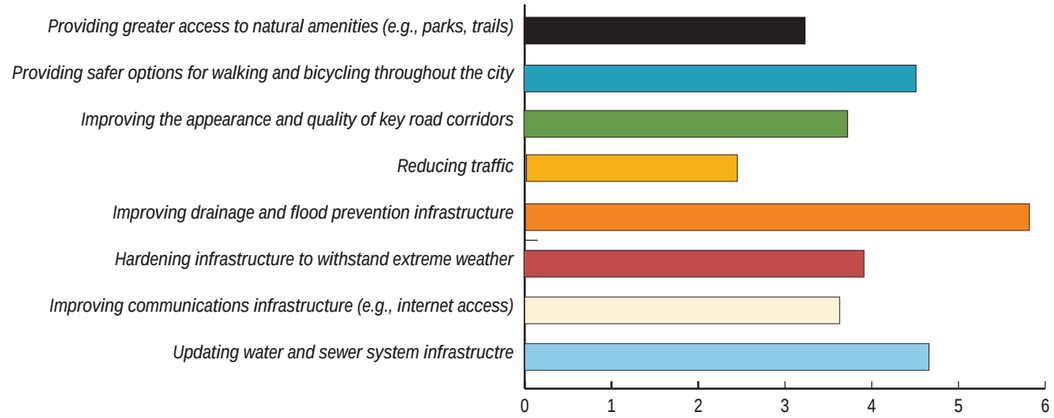
Respondents want Harlingen to focus on housing that attracts families and young professionals. At the same time, the City should ensure that affordable housing is available to accommodate older residents looking to downsize and residents working in the service industry or blue-collar jobs.

Question 11. In the future, residents should be connected to destinations within the City through:



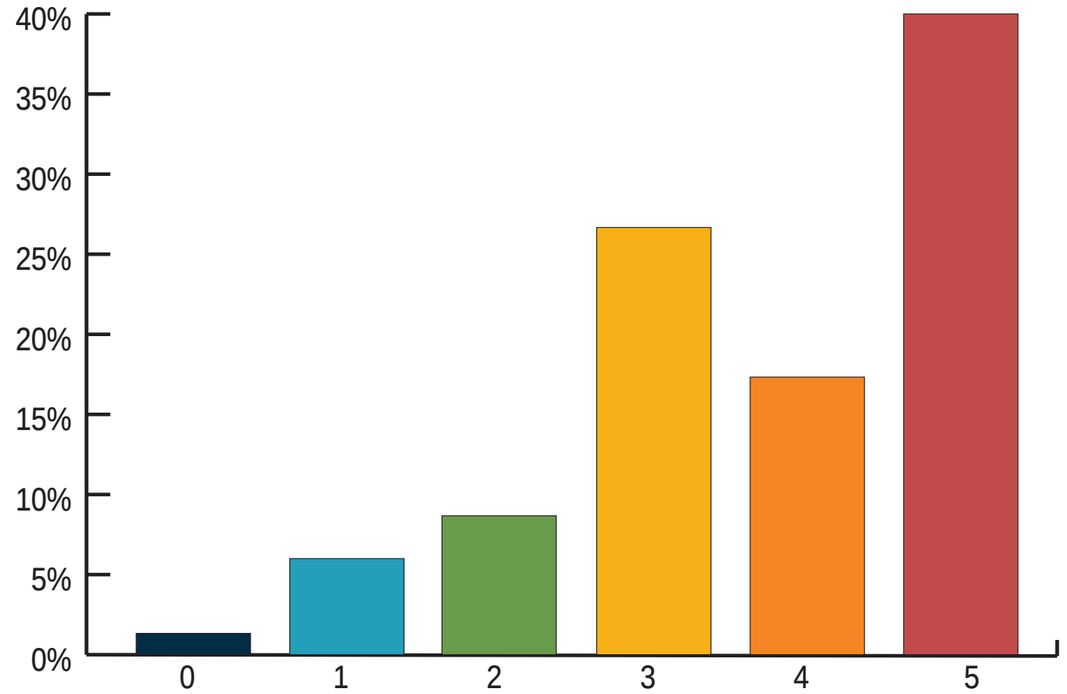
The primary way respondents wish to be connected to destinations in Harlingen is through local streets that accommodate bikes, transit, cars, and pedestrians, followed closely by public transportation that provides an alternative to private vehicles. These responses indicate a desire for improved multi-modal transportation within the City of Harlingen.

Question 12. Infrastructure investments the City should focus on:



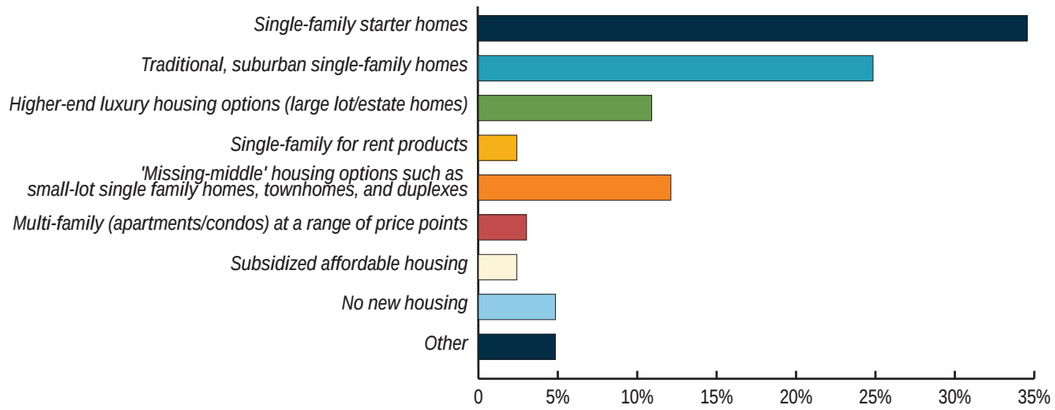
Most of the infrastructure investments identified by respondents are related to the City's water and wastewater management or transportation system. The top priorities are improving drainage and flood prevention infrastructure and updating water and sewer system infrastructure. Additionally, the City should focus on providing safer options for walking and bicycling throughout the City.

Question 13. How supportive are you of bringing more residential land-uses (e.g., housing, apartments) to Harlingen?



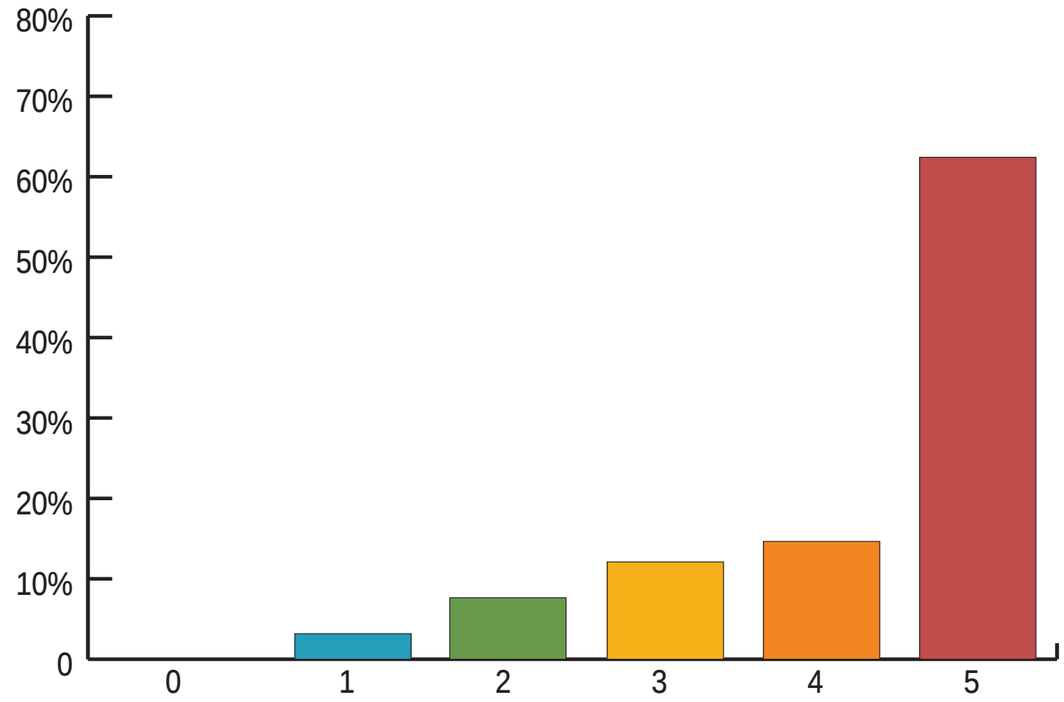
Respondents generally support bringing more residential land use to Harlingen. On a scale of 0-5, the average level of support among respondents is 3.73, with the largest percentage offering 5/5 or 100% approval.

Question 14. I would support more of the following housing options in Harlingen:



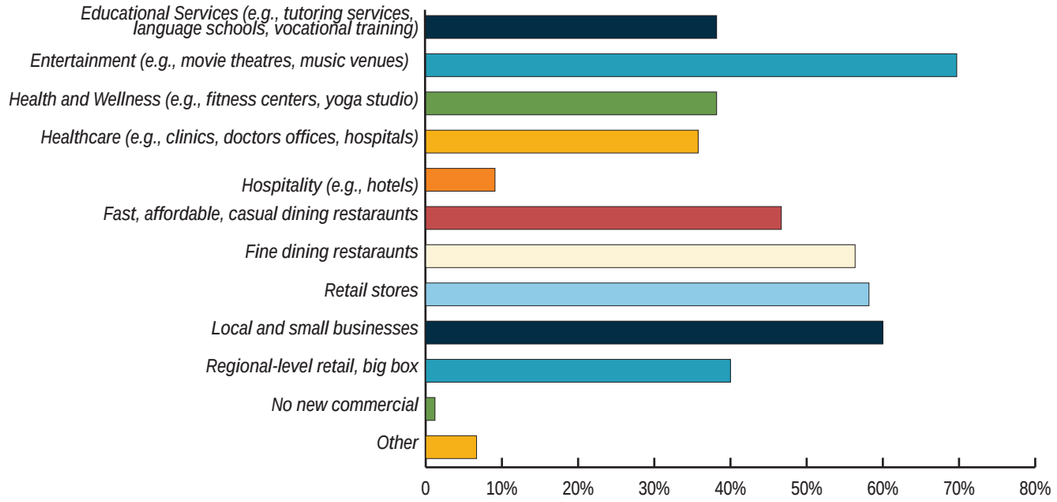
The primary forms of housing respondents want to see in Harlingen are affordable single-family starter homes (34.55%) and suburban single-family houses (24.85%). There is some support for "missing middle" housing types. However, traditional homeownership appears to be a big priority in the community. This is reflected in the lack of support for single-family rentals, multi-family apartments, and subsidized housing.

Question 15. How supportive are you of bringing more commercial land-uses (e.g., shops, restaurants, offices) in Harlingen?



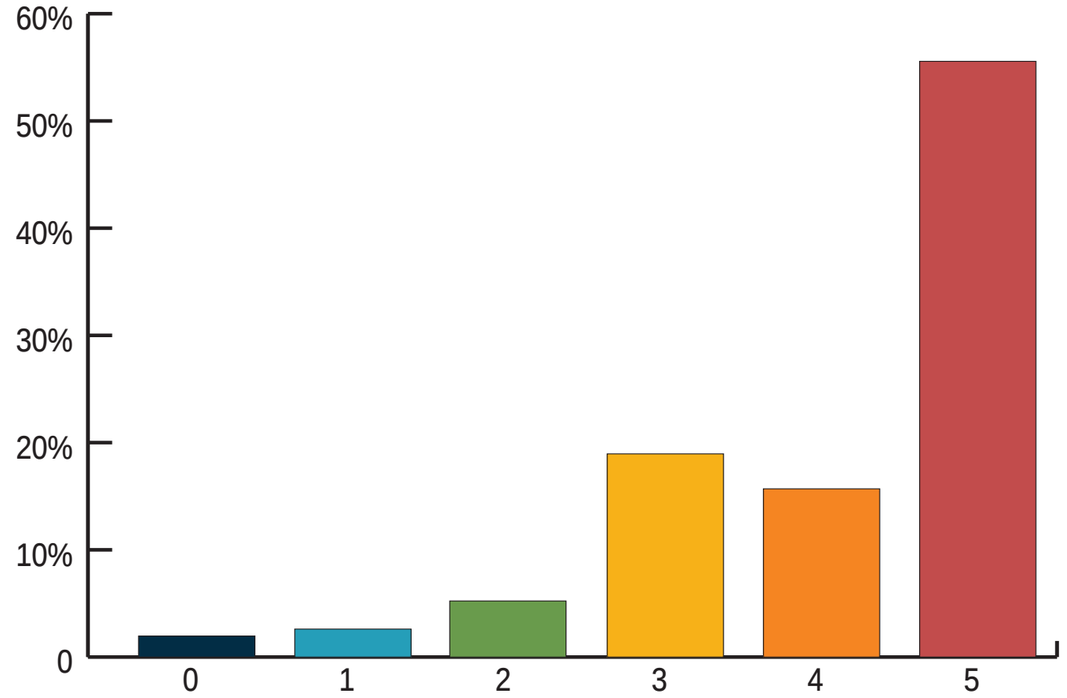
The overwhelming majority of respondents support more commercial land uses in Harlingen. On a scale of 0-5, the average level of support is 4.25, with more than half of the respondents giving their full support.

Question 16. What commercial businesses would you like to see more of in Harlingen?



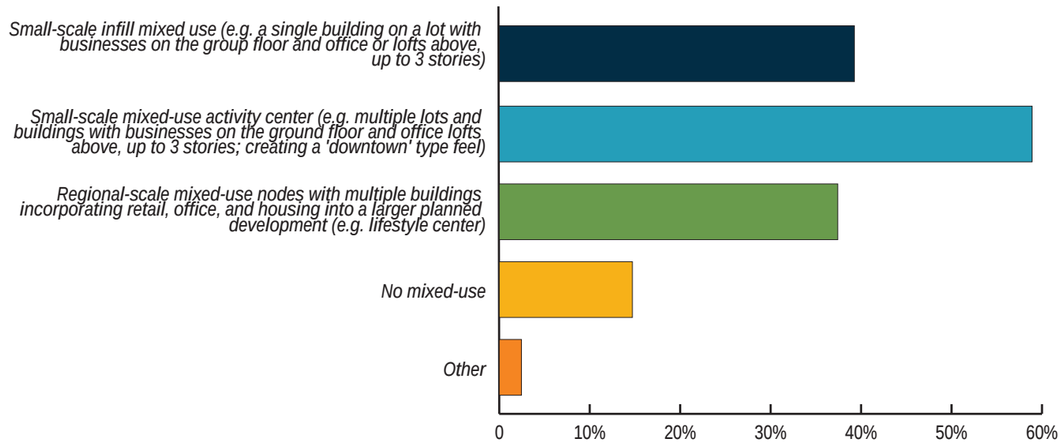
When asked what kind of businesses Harlingen needs more of, most respondents answered entertainment (69.7%). More than half of respondents also chose local and small businesses (60%), retail stores (58.18%), and fine dining restaurants (56.36%). Only two respondents said they do not want to see any new commercial businesses in Harlingen.

Question 17. How supportive are you of bringing more mixed-use developments (e.g., areas where residential, commercial and recreational uses are combined) to Harlingen?



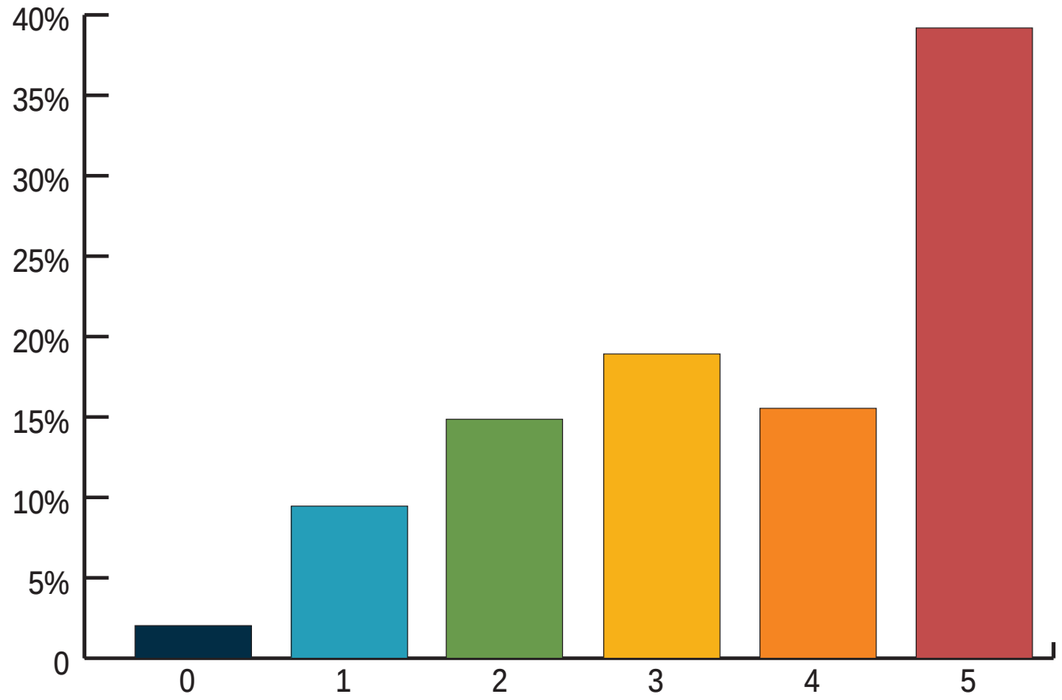
Respondents are generally supportive of bringing more mixed-use developments to Harlingen. On a scale of 0-5, the average level of support is 4.10, with a little more than half of respondents giving their full support.

Question 18. What types of mixed-use development would you like to see in Harlingen?



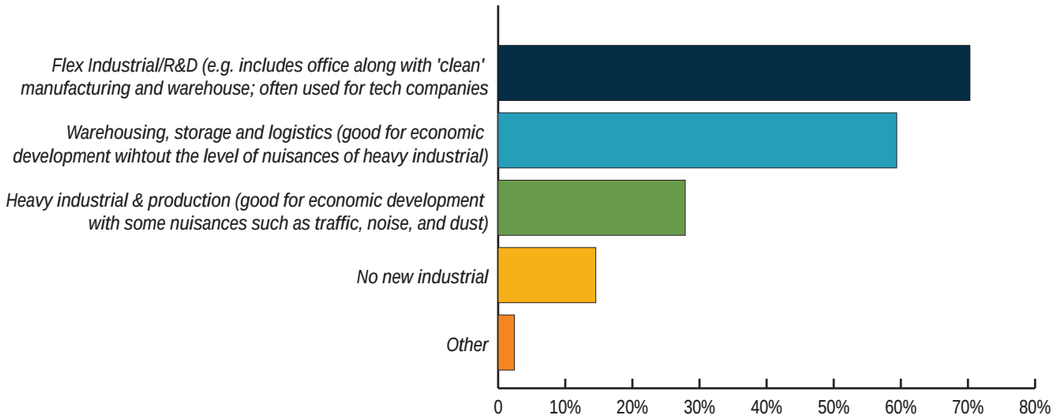
Small-scale mixed-use developments received the most support among respondents, primarily in the form of mixed-use activity centers (58.9%) or infill projects (39.26%). There was also some support for regional-scale mixed-use nodes, while almost 15% of respondents opposed mixed-use altogether.

Question 19. How supportive are you of bringing more industrial land-uses (e.g., factories, warehousing) to Harlingen?



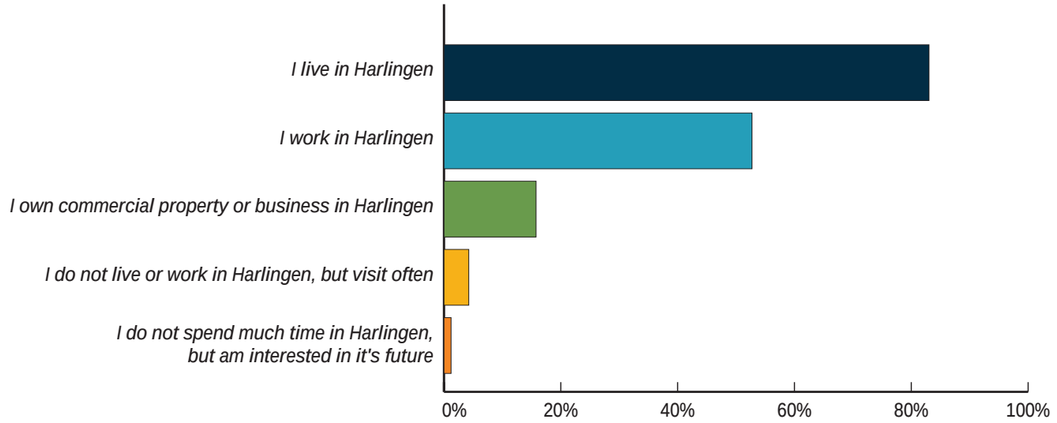
Support for industrial land-uses in Harlingen was mixed but leaned more in favor of it. On a scale of 0-5, the average level of support is 3.54; however, 5/5 or 100% support still received the largest percentage of responses.

Question 20. What types of industrial development would you like to see more of in Harlingen?



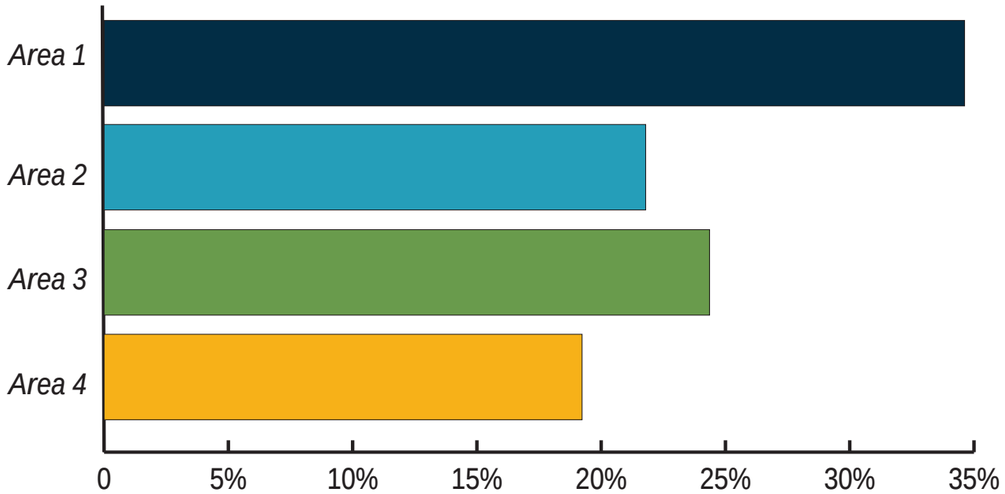
Respondents showed a preference for light industrial uses like flex industrial and R&D (70.3%) and warehousing, storage, and logistics (59.39%). Over a quarter of respondents support some heavy industrial uses despite the associated nuisances, while nearly 15% do not support any new industrial.

Question 21. Which of the below describes you?



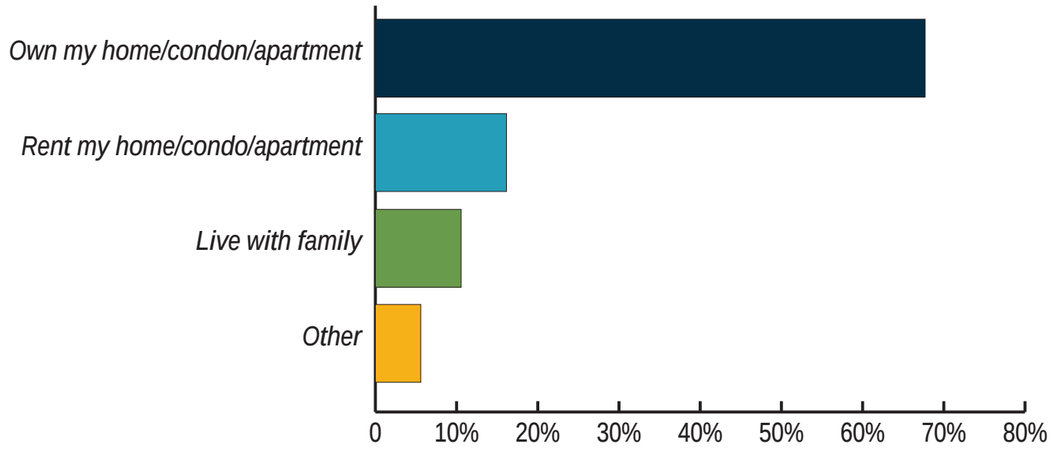
Most respondents live in Harlingen (83.03%), followed closely by those who work in the City (52.73%). More than 15% of respondents own a commercial property or business in the City.

Question 22. Which area of Harlingen do you live?



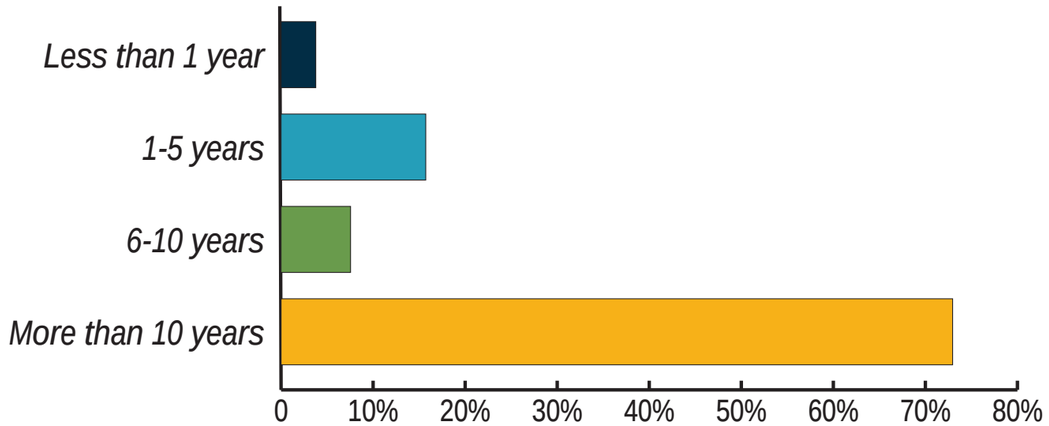
Respondents were provided with a map of Harlingen divided into four areas and then asked which area they lived in. Most respondents live in Area 1 (34.62%), which includes downtown and the surrounding areas. It is followed by Area 3 to the south (24.36%), Area 2 to the northeast (21.79%), and Area 4 to the west (19.23%).

Question 23. If you live in Harlingen, what best describes your living situation?



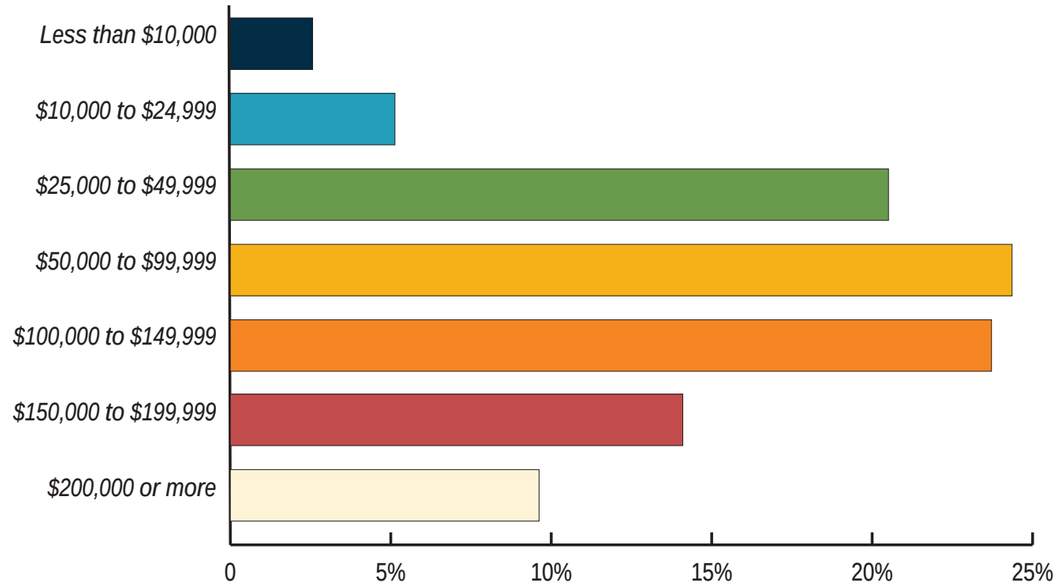
Most respondents living in Harlingen own their own home, with nearly 70% indicating such. This is followed by respondents who rent (16.15%) and those who live with family (10.56%).

Question 24. If you live in Harlingen, how many years have you lived here?



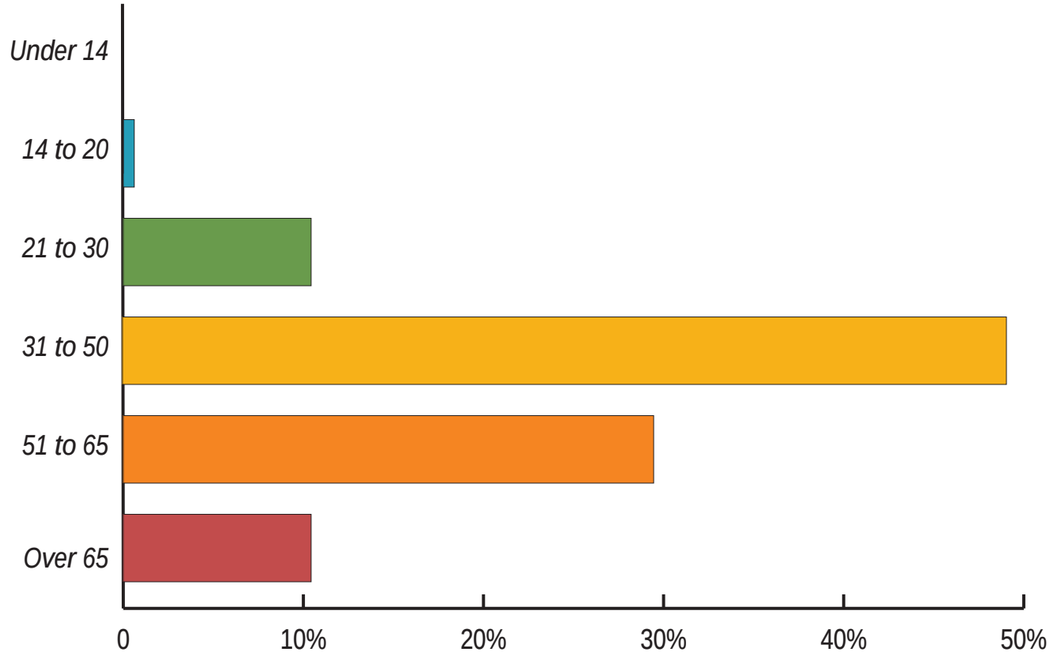
More than 70% of respondents have lived in Harlingen for over 10 years. Far behind at nearly 16%, the second largest group consists of those who have lived in Harlingen between 1 to 5 years, followed by those who've lived in the City for 6 to 10 years at approximately 8%. Less than 4% of respondents have lived in Harlingen for under a year.

Question 25. What is your household income in the last 12 months?



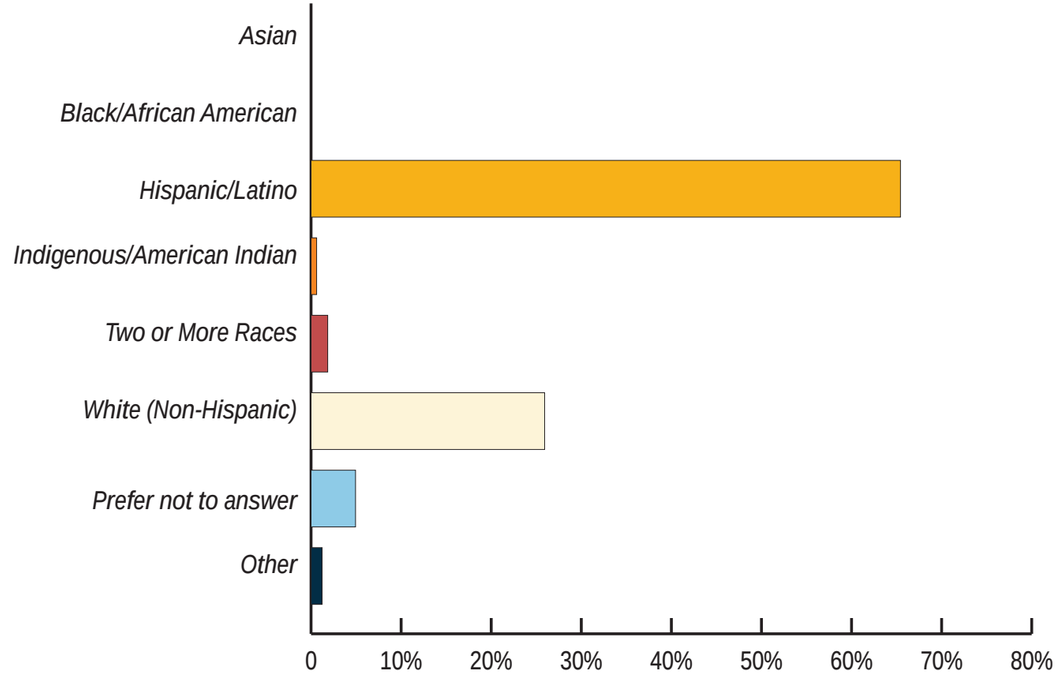
Most respondents report an annual household income between $50,000 and $99,900 (24.36%), which seems in line with Harlingen's median household income of $55,891, as reported on the American Community Survey (5-Years Estimates) 2019-2023. Survey results may skew towards higher incomes, with nearly half of respondents earning more than six figures. In comparison, less than 30% of total respondents report an annual household income under $50,000.

Question 26. What is your age?



Most of the respondents who participated in the survey were middle-aged and older adults. Almost half of all respondents were 31 to 50 years old (49.08%), followed by those between 51 and 65 years old (29.45%). Participation was lowest among those under twenty (0.61%), while the same number of young adults between 21 and 30 years old and seniors over 65 responded to the survey (10.43%).

Question 27. What best describes your race/ethnicity?



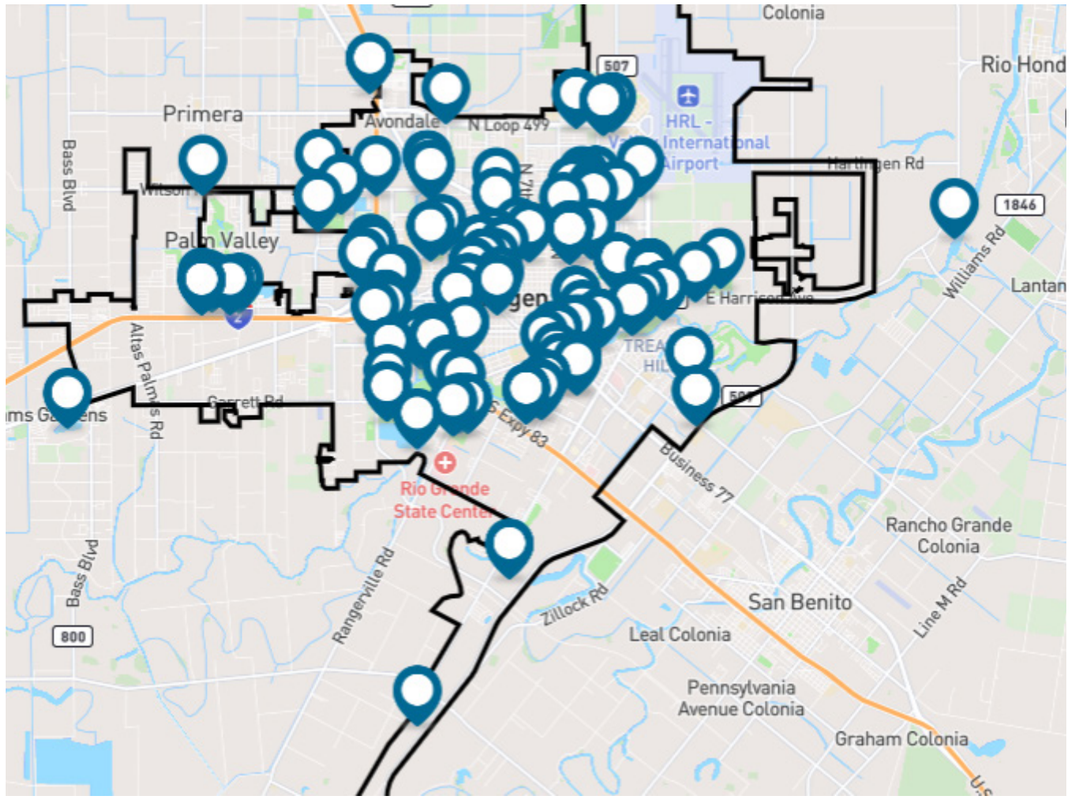
Most respondents identify as Hispanic or Latino (65.43%), followed by a quarter identifying as White only (25.93%). Nearly 5% of respondents refused to recognize their race, and none of the respondents described their race as Asian or Black/African American.

Online Pin Mapping Tool

The primary mechanism for greater virtual engagement for this plan was an online mapping activity where participants could leave georeferenced comments on a map of Harlingen. Website visitors could read and vote on others' comments to express agreement or disagreement. This feature helped the project team identify the comments that were most relevant and helpful for developing recommendations. Key themes that emerged from the online map comments included:

- There is need for improved road maintenance, sidewalk construction and upgraded traffic management, including the incorporation of roundabouts and speed bumps.
- Improved safety through enhanced lighting in public parking lots and parks, along with increased enforcement patrols.
- There is a desire for improved community amenities such as updated playgrounds, the incorporation of greater greenery along significant corridors, shaded trails and an indoor amphitheater or recreational space.
- Addressing homelessness by creating supportive housing, relocating services and incorporating greater community resources to address the population.

The online mapping activity opened after the project launched in October 2024 and was available for continuous participation throughout most of the project process.



Screenshot of the Online Pin Mapping Tool

Public Engagement #1

On November 18, 2024 at 6pm at the Harlingen Community Center the planning team held its first community engagement event. The meeting was hosted by the City of Harlingen and facilitated by Freese & Nichols, the City's consultant. 55 participants signed in on the meeting sign in sheets. Advertisements were made via the City's communication channels, social media, and the project website. Advertisements and all meeting materials were made available in both English and Spanish. w

The purpose of this event was to educate the community on the upcoming process, how to get and stay involved and to gather initial feedback on their values, priorities and goals for the community, prior to the consultant team or City attempting to identify a set of goals and objectives. The evening began with a formal presentation by the consultant team, followed by an open house with interactive stations and one on one conversations with the participants. City staff were also in attendance and available to talk with residents.

The meeting agenda included:

- Overview of the Process
- Project Schedule
- Project Scope
- Next Steps
- Open House Activities (Interactive Stations)

The interactive stations topics included:

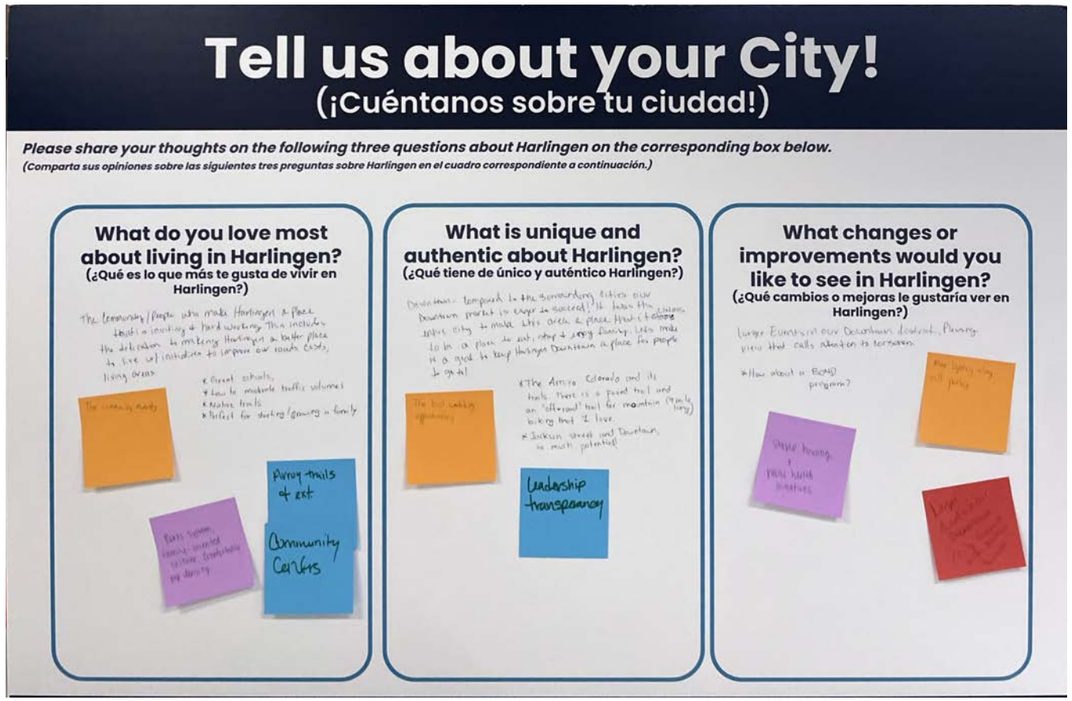
- Project and Website Information
- Community Insights, Aspirations and Goals
- Land Use and Development
- Transportation and Mobility
- Infrastructure and Public Facilities
- Shocks and Stressors



A screen capture of the meeting advertisement on the City's Facebook page.



Images from the public meetings in November 2024. Top row: welcome table with informational boards and participant sign in. Middle row: the presentation done by the consultant team. Bottom row: the interactive stations and one-on-one conversations.



When given the opportunity to tell us about the City of Harlingen, respondents expressed a deep appreciation for the community, its leadership, and public amenities including the community center and the City's parks and trails. The Downtown, particularly along Jackson Street, was identified as an area of investment, with many opportunities for new businesses and events.

Tell us About your City

Responses

What do you love most about living in Harlingen?

- The community/people who make Harlingen a place that is inviting + hard working. This includes the dedication to making Harlingen a better place to live w/ initiatives to improve our roads, costs, and living areas.
- Great schools, low to moderate traffic, nature trails, perfect for starting/growing a family
- The community events
- Parks system, family-oriented culture, comfortable pop density
- Arroyo trails + ext.
- Community centers

What is unique and authentic about Harlingen?

- Downtown – Compared to the surrounding cities our Downtown market is eager to succeed! It takes the entire City to make this area a place that it claims to be – a place to eat, shop + enjoy family. Let's make it a goal to keep Harlingen Downtown a place for people to go!
- Arroyo Colorado and its trails. There is a paved trail and an "off-road" trail for mountain biking (9 miles long) that I love
- Jackson Street has so much potential
- The birdwatching opportunities
- Leadership transparency

What improvements would you like to see in Harlingen?

- Larger events in our Downtown
- How about a BOND program?
- Stable housing + public health initiatives
- More lighting along parks



Harlingen's community goals focus on improving the City's infrastructure as well as community well-being. Activity is a key theme throughout the responses, with improved pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, and new recreational facilities being a priority for many respondents.

Community Goals

Responses

Goal 1: Economic Growth

- More outreach programs for small businesses

Goal 2: Transportation

- More pedestrian-friendly facilities
- Lighting citywide, lots of residential subdivisions need it
- Lots of intersections need pedestrian-friendly improvements

Goal 3: Community Character and Identity

- N/A

Goal 4: Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space

- More lighting along trails around the Arroyo
- I would like for Harlingen to have more bicycle lanes – A bicycle network would be awesome.
- Rec Center for the Youth
- Public health

Goal 5: Housing and Neighborhoods

- Revitalize vacant housing

Goal 6: Civic Facilities and Buildings

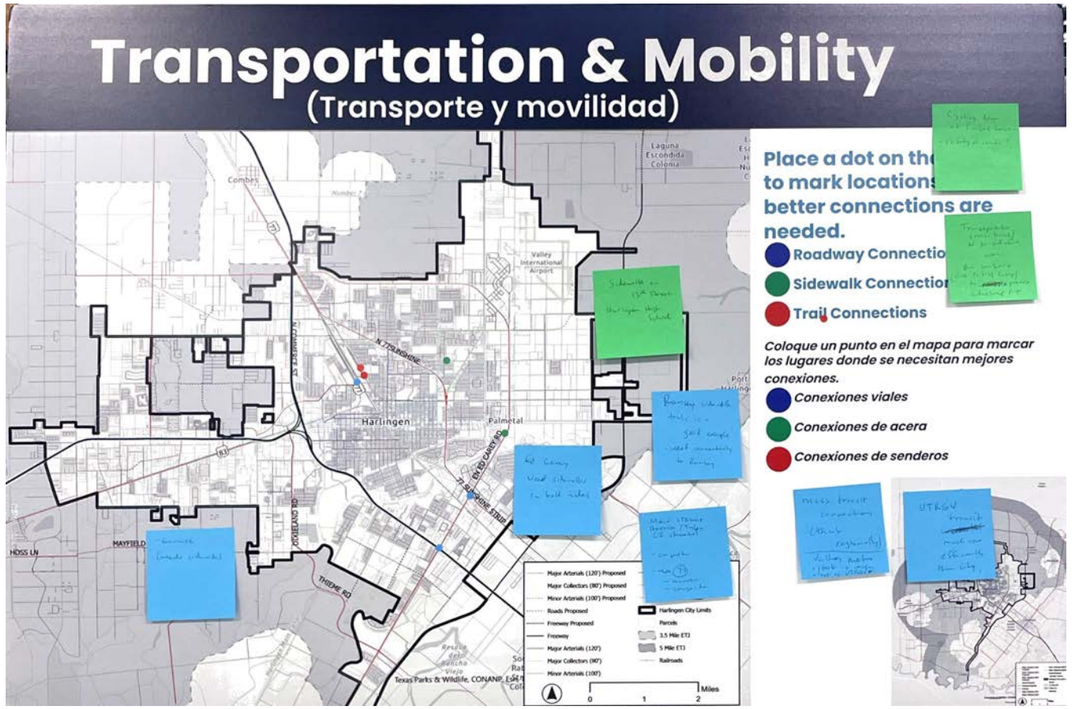
- Rec Center
- Multi-use courts for basketball, fast soccer or soccer or pickleball

Goal 7: Education

- Invest in Harlingen education programs, trade schools and degree offerings
- More outreach to communities about "keeping harlingen beautiful"

Goal 8: Public Safety

- Sidewalks and lighting
- Increase police awareness on the Northside of town
- Streetlights (sustainable)
- Incorporate behavioral health response in public safety/police

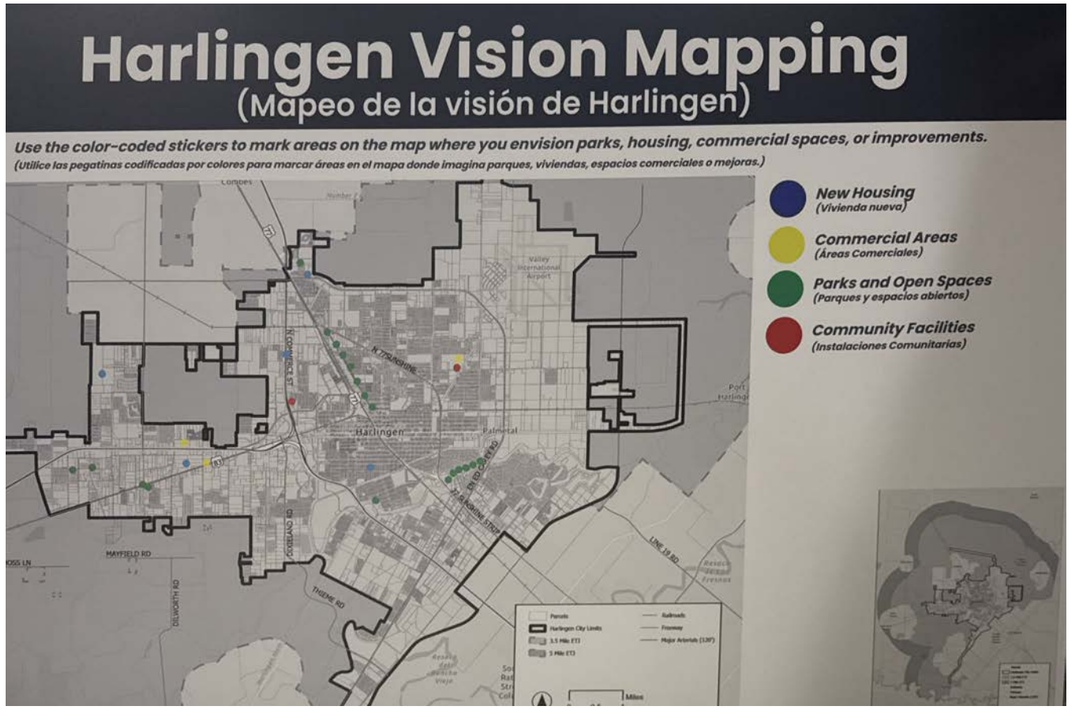


Improving connectivity is a major priority for Harlingen residents. This includes adding pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks along busy roads and expanding access to public transportation both within the City of Harlingen and regionally. Additionally, trail connections were suggested at Vestal Park.

Transportation & Mobility

Responses

- Garrett (needs sidewalks)
- Sidewalks on 13th Street near Harlingen High School
- Ed Carey needs sidewalks on both sides
- Ramsey sidewalk trail is a good example – need connectivity to Ramsey
- Main Street Harissa/Tyler (2 streets)
  - Congestion
- Mass transit connections (think regionally) Valley Metro
  - Look at routes, look at UTRGV
- UTRGV transit is much more efficient than the City
- Cycling done at later hours – safety on roads?
- Transportation (mass board) N to individual areas.
- Bus workers (and Port of Entry) to promote industry park



Residents were asked to visualize what they wanted to see in Harlingen by using color coded stickers to mark where the City should develop parks and open space, new housing, and community facilities. Several spots were identified for parks and open space along Sam Houston St. and North Commerce St. The intersections at N T St. and Jefferson St. and Morgan Blvd and Grimes Ave. were suggested as locations for new community facilities. Housing is needed throughout the City, primarily along major thoroughfares.

Harlingen Vision Mapping

Responses

Parks and Open Space

- Between Highway 77 and N 77 Sunshine
- Along Sam Houston St, north of Sunshine strip

New Housing

- Scattered throughout the City, primarily along major thoroughfares

Community Facilities

- N T St-Jefferson St Intersection
- Morgan Blvd-Grimes Ave



Residents expressed a strong preference for mixed-use developments that integrate residential, retail, and office spaces to create vibrant, multifunctional communities. Respondents reflect interest in spaces that promote walkability, leisure, and social interaction, such as walking trails, boutique retail, and restaurants. While single-family homes maintain some appeal, the focus is on diverse, inclusive development with an emphasis on accessibility and a balance between urban amenities and open green spaces.

Tell Us About Development

Responses

Residential Types

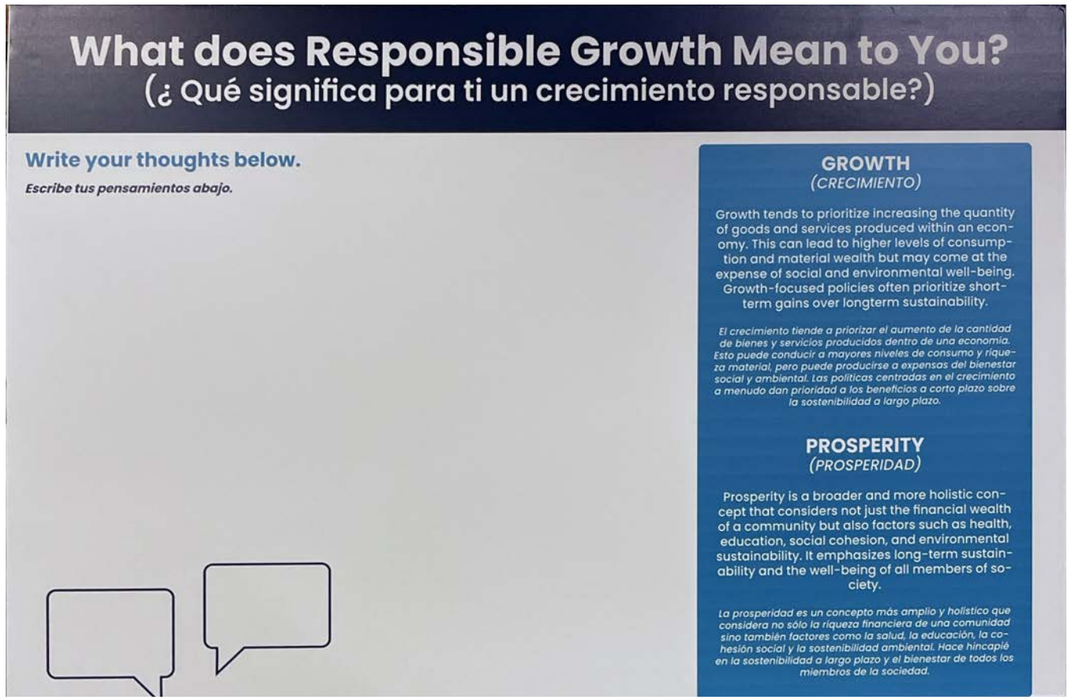
- Single-Family: 3
- Townhomes & Duplexes: 1
- Mid-Rise Multifamily: 0
- Mixed-Use Residential: 6

Commercial Types

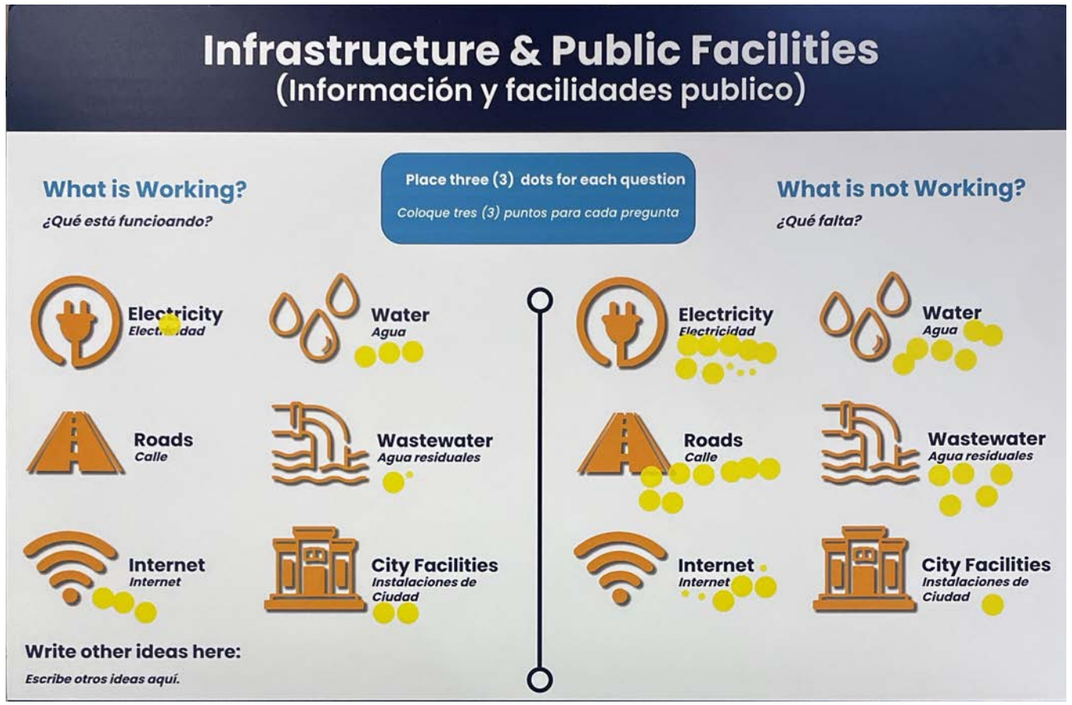
- General Offices: 0
- Boutique Retails: 5
- Restaurants: 4
- Mixed-Use Office/Retail: 6

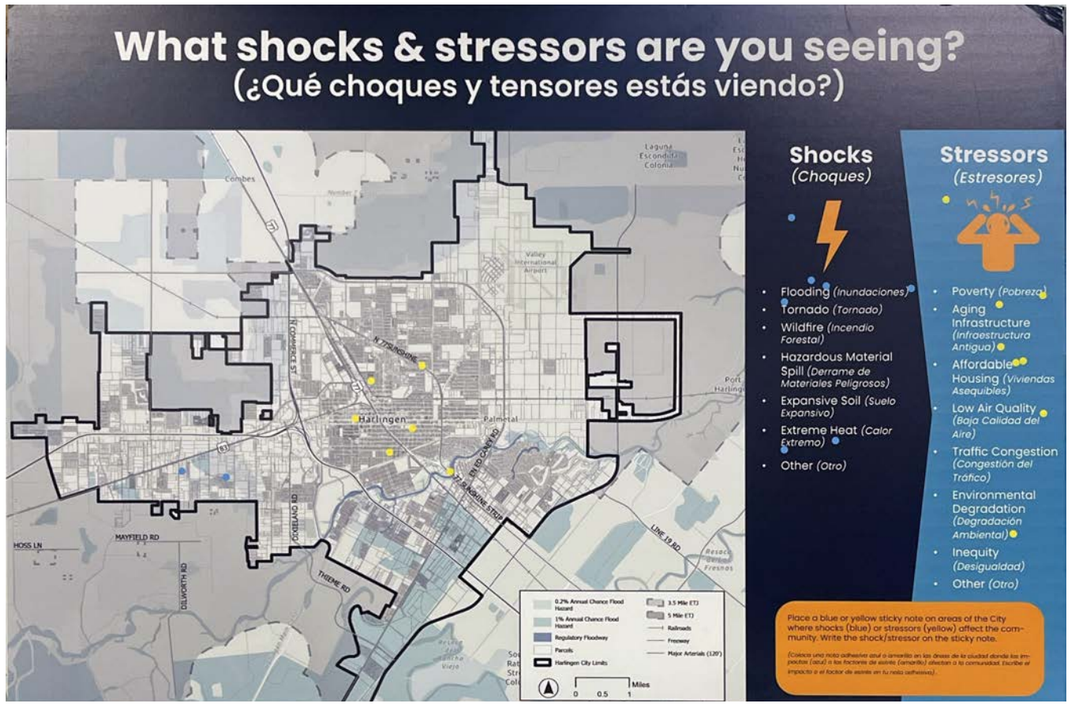
Parks and Open Spaces

- Pocket Parks: 2
- Walking Trails: 4
- Recreational Spaces: 3
- Neighborhood Parks: 2



No one responded to this board.





When assessing the state of infrastructure and public facilities, residents were asked to identify both strengths and areas needing improvement within the City. Only one piece of infrastructure, city facilities, was answered as "working" more than "not working." Electricity emerged as the top priority for improvement, followed by roads, internet, water, and wastewater.

WHAT IS WORKING?	# OF DOTS
Electricity	1
Water	3
Roads	0
Waste Water	2
Internet	3
City Facilities	2

WHAT IS NOT WORKING?	# OF DOTS
Electricity	10
Water	6
Roads	8
Waste Water	5
Internet	6
City Facilities	1

Flooding is the most prevalent shock that the City experiences followed by extreme heat. Many of the stressors identified by participants are associated with the City of Harlingen's low socio-economic demographics including poverty and affordable housing. These issues highlight the challenges the city faces in terms of resilience and long-term sustainability.

What shocks & stressors are you seeing?

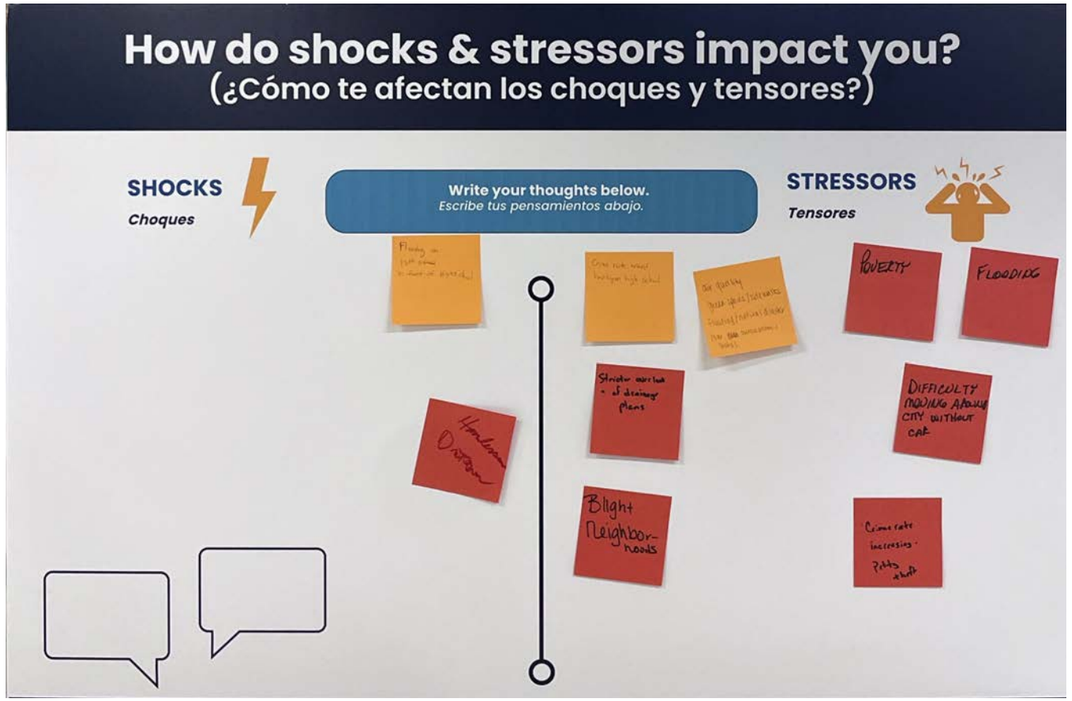
Responses

Shocks

- Flooding (4)
- Extreme Heat (2)

Stressors

- Poverty (2)
- Aging Infrastructure (1)
- Affordable Housing (2)
- Low Air Quality (1)
- Environmental Degradation (1)



Participants further discussed shocks and stressors affecting the City, detailing specific concerns impacting them directly. These include flooding, petty crime, poverty, and inadequate infrastructure, particularly for residents who don't have a car. These interconnected shocks and stressors strain resilience and quality of life, emphasizing the need for comprehensive, long-term solutions.

How do shocks & stressors impact you?

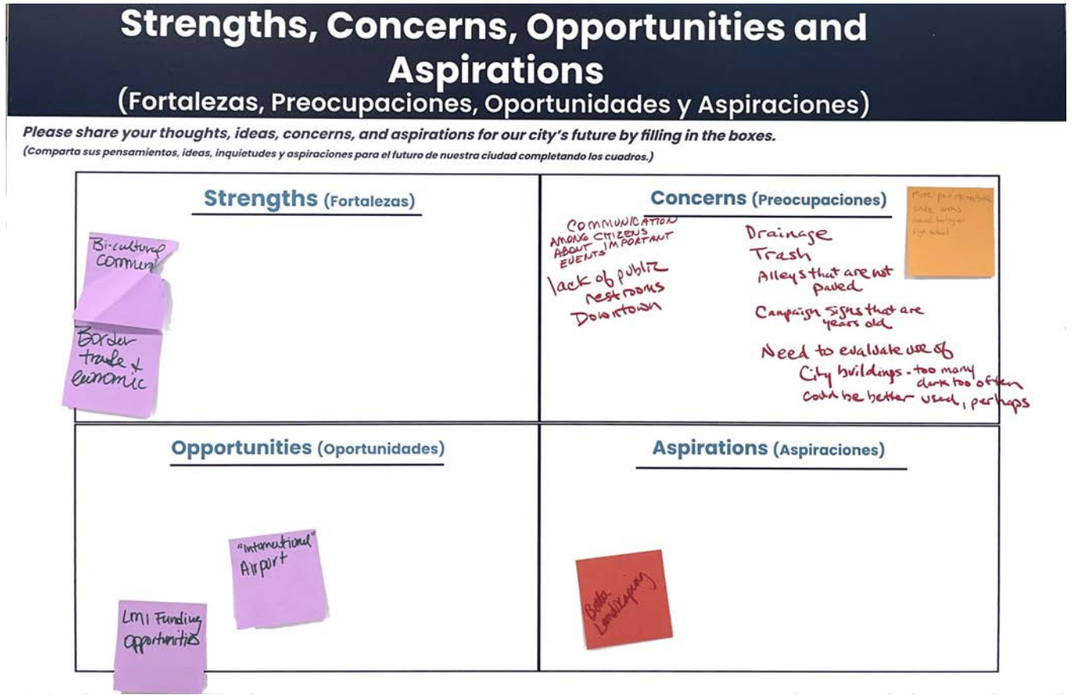
Responses

Shocks

- Flooding on 13th street by front of Harlingen High School
- Homelessness Downtown

Stressors

- Crime rate around Harlingen High School
- Stricter overlook of drainage plans
- Poverty
- Flooding
- Difficulty moving around City without car
- Blight neighborhoods
- Crime rate increasing, petty theft
- Air quality, green spaces/sidewalks flooding, national disasters, low socioeconomic status



The City of Harlingen's greatest strength is its bi-cultural heritage and trade across the border. Participants raised concerns about communication between the City and residents as well as infrastructure issues like trash, drainage, and underutilized city buildings. Opportunities lie in leveraging the international airport and funding for low- to moderate-income initiatives, while aspirations focus on enhancing public spaces through improved landscaping. Overall, the responses reflect a desire to address practical challenges while capitalizing on unique assets to foster growth and beautification.

Strengths, Concerns, Opportunities, and Aspirations

Responses

Strengths

- Bi-Cultural Commerce
- Border Trade + Economic

Concerns

- Communication among citizens about important events
- Lack of public restrooms in Downtown
- Drainage, trash, alleys that are not paved, campaign signs that are years old
- Need to evaluate use of City buildings – too many dark too often could be better used, perhaps

Opportunities

- "International" Airport
- LMI Funding opportunities

Aspirations

- Better Landscaping

Public Engagement #2

On February 24, 2025 at 6pm at the Harlingen Community Center the planning team held its second community engagement event. The meeting was hosted by the City of Harlingen and facilitated by Freese & Nichols, the City's consultant. 21 participants signed in on the meeting sign in sheets. Advertisements were made via the City's communication channels, social media, and the project website. Advertisements and all meeting materials were made available in both English and Spanish.

The purpose of this event was to present and discuss the baseline assessments, review draft goals and objectives, and gather feedback on additional comprehensive plan topics that would help generate future recommendations. The evening began with a formal presentation by the consultant team, followed by an open house with interactive stations and one on one conversations with the participants. City staff were also in attendance and available to talk with residents.

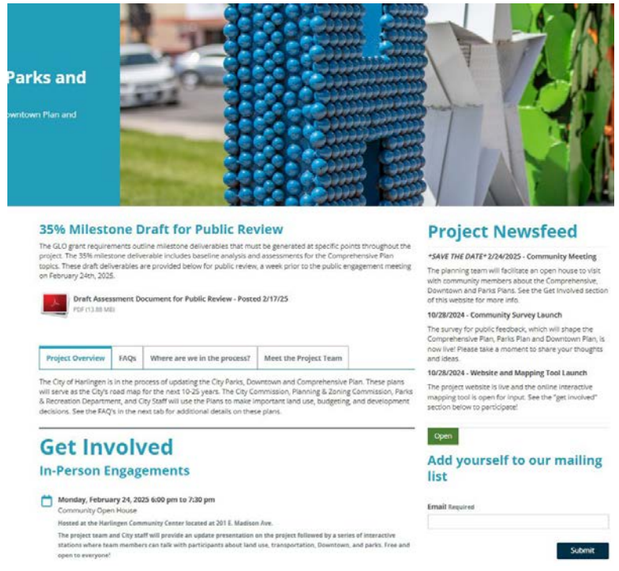
The meeting agenda included:

- Project and Process Overview
- Review of Community Feedback
- Key Takeaways from Assessments
- Next Steps
- Open House Activities (Interactive Stations)

The interactive stations topics included:

- Project and Website Information
- Overview of Public Feedback Received
- Draft Vision and Goals
- Resilience and Baseline Assessments (Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure, and Economics)
- Land Use, Transportation, Downtown and Parks Feedback





A screen capture of the meeting advertisement on the City's Facebook page and the meeting information on the project website. Additionally, this shows the 35% milestone document made publicly available on the project website a week prior to the meeting.



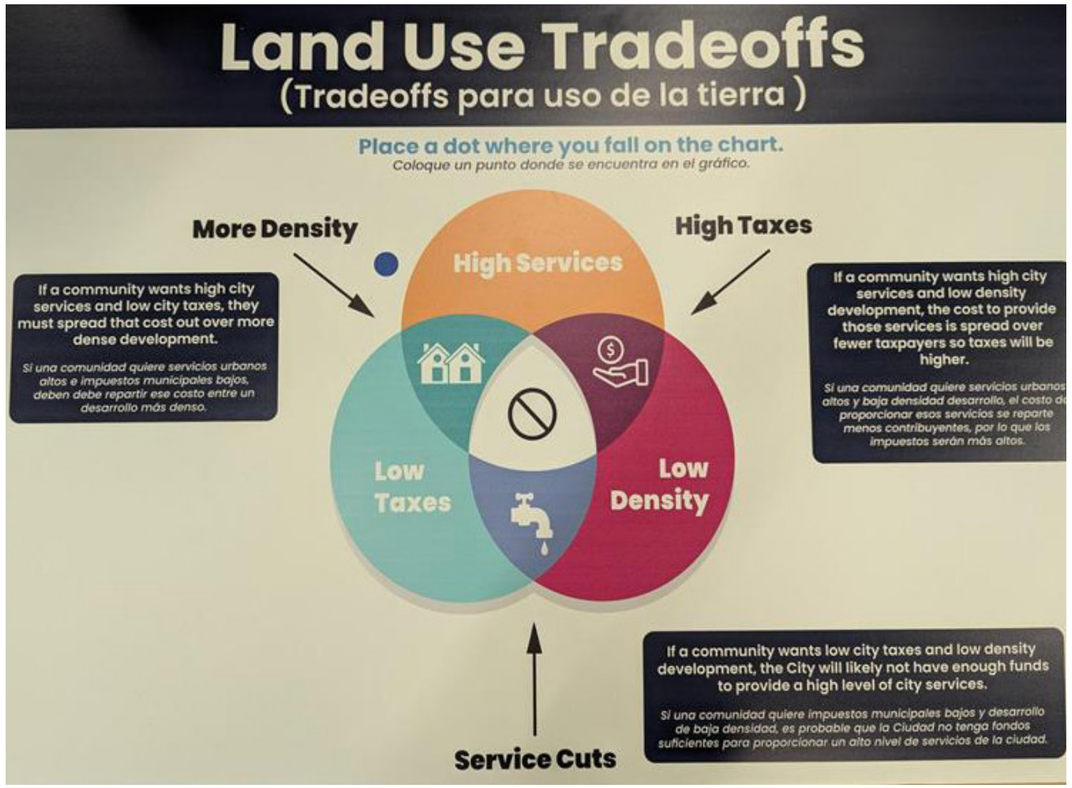






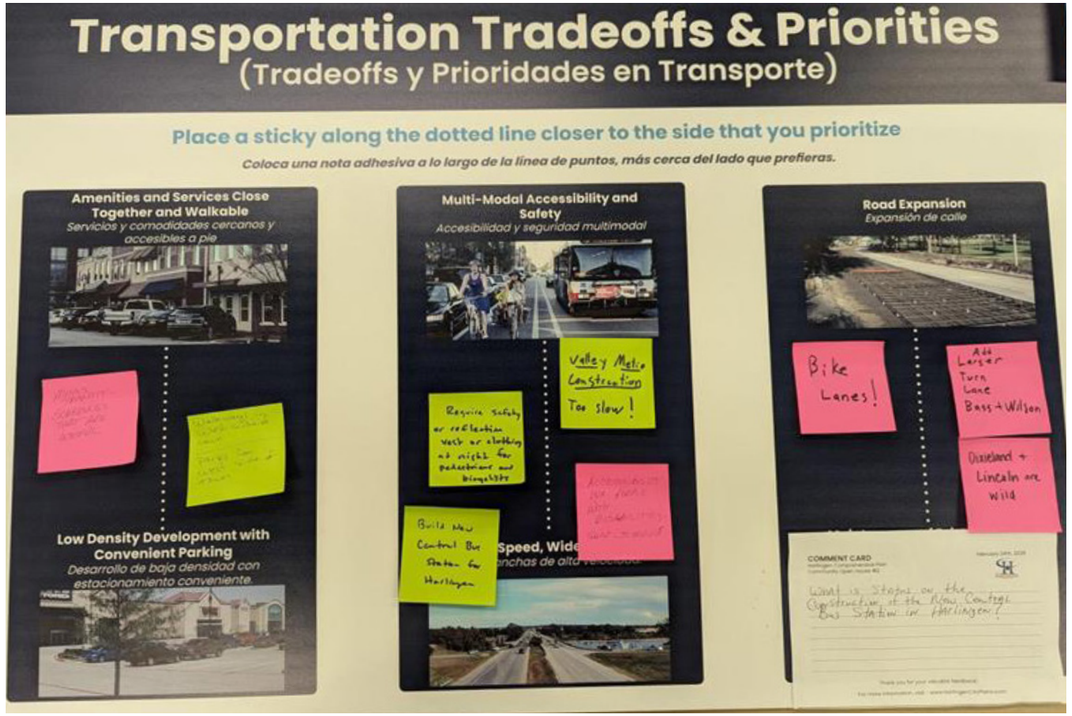


Images from the public meetings in February 2025. Top row: the presentation done by the consultant team. Middle and bottom rows: the interactive stations and one-on-one conversations.



Only one person responded to the Land-Use Trade Offs board. Their preferred scenario involves low taxes and high services in exchange for more density.

TRADEOFF	# OF DOTS
Low Taxes + High Services = More Density	1
Low Taxes + Low Density = Service Cuts	0
Low Density + High Services = High Taxes	0



Participants expressed a strong interest in multi-modal transportation. Priorities include enhanced safety measures for cyclists and pedestrians through complete streets with bike lanes and sidewalks as well as improved Mass transit. There is support for the new central bus station, although construction has been slow, and participants hope that Valley Metro will improve its bus schedule and have better accessibility for those with disabilities.

Transportation Tradeoffs & Priorities

Responses

Amenities and Services Close Together and Walkability OR Low Density Development with Convenient Parking

- Mass Transit- Sidewalks that are useful
- Walkways and Parks in Westside of Harlingen

Multi-Modal Accessibility and Safety OR High Speed, Wide Streets

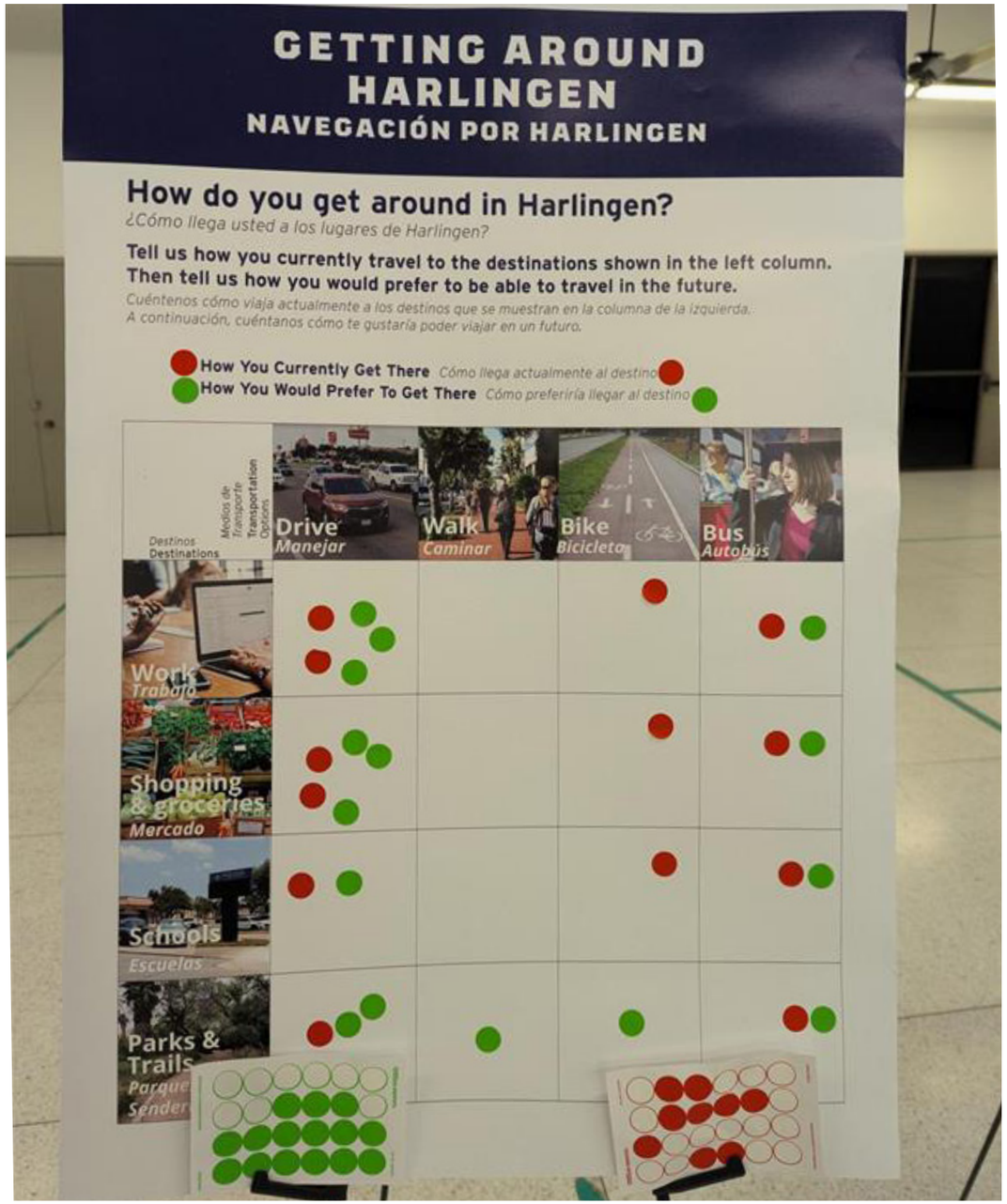
- Valley Metro construction too slow!
- Require safety or reflective vest or clothing at night pedestrians and bicyclists
- Build new central bus station for Harlingen
- Accessible for people with disabilities – good schedule

Road Expansion OR Maintenance of Existing Roads

- Bike lanes!
- Add laser turn lane Bass + Wilson
- Dixieland + Lincoln are wild

Comment Card

- What is the status on the construction of new central bus station in Harlingen?



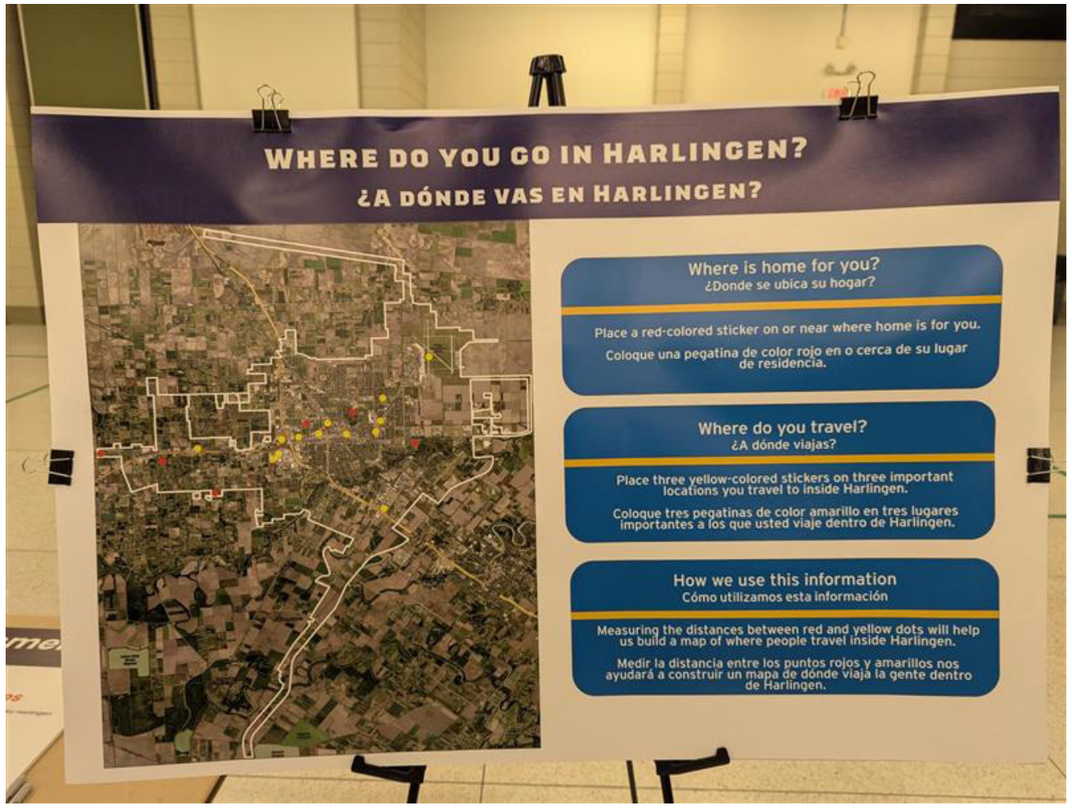
Responses represent the individual preferences of the participants. Driving is the most popular mode of transportation to all destinations both currently and hypothetically. There is some interest in walking or biking to Harlingen's parks as well as general bus use.

Getting Around Harlingen

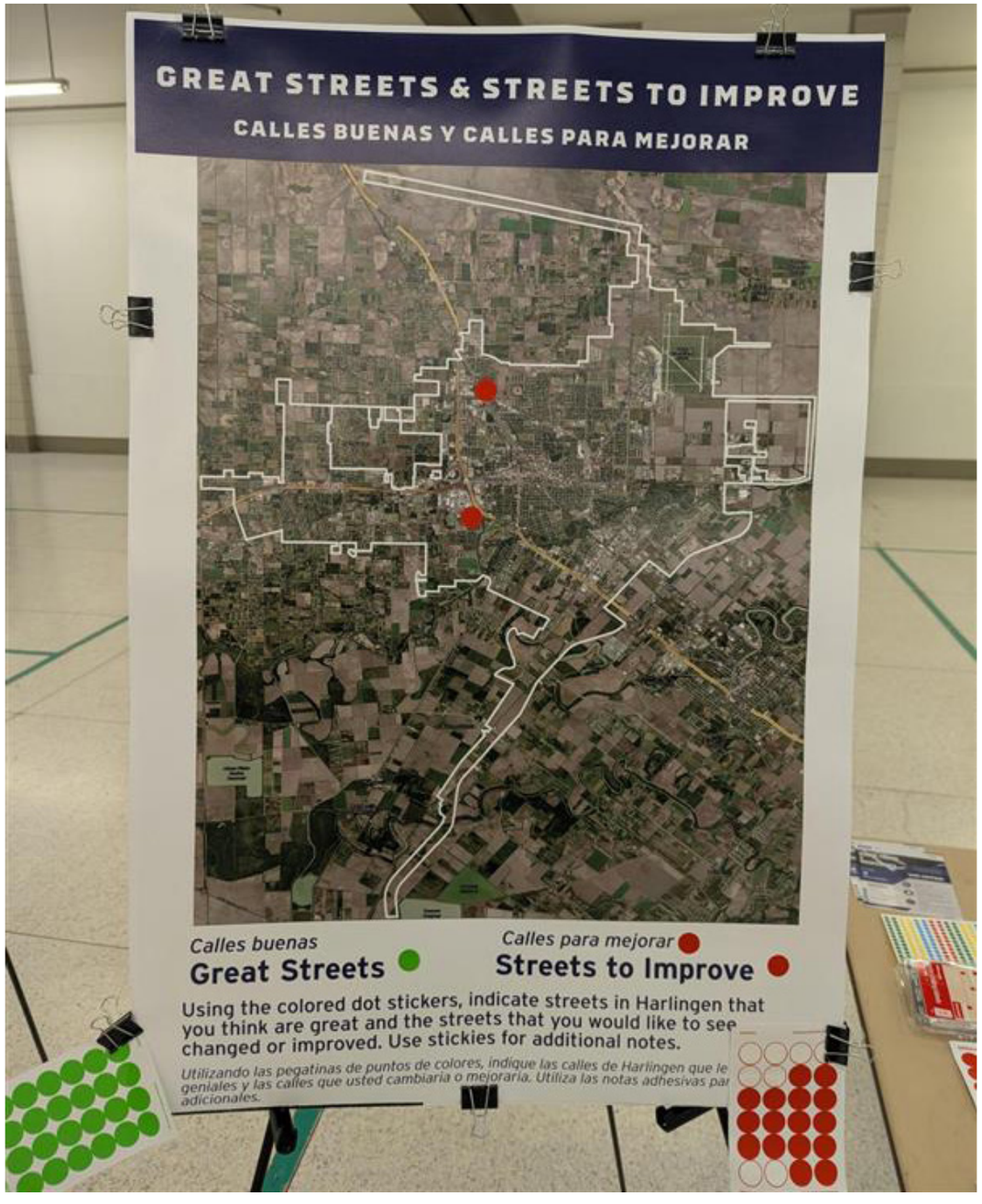
Responses

HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY GET THERE?	MODE OF TRANSPORTATION			
DESTINATION	Drive	Walk	Bike	Bus
Work	2	0	1	1
Shopping & Groceries	2	0	1	1
Schools	1	0	1	1
Parks & Trails	1	0	0	1

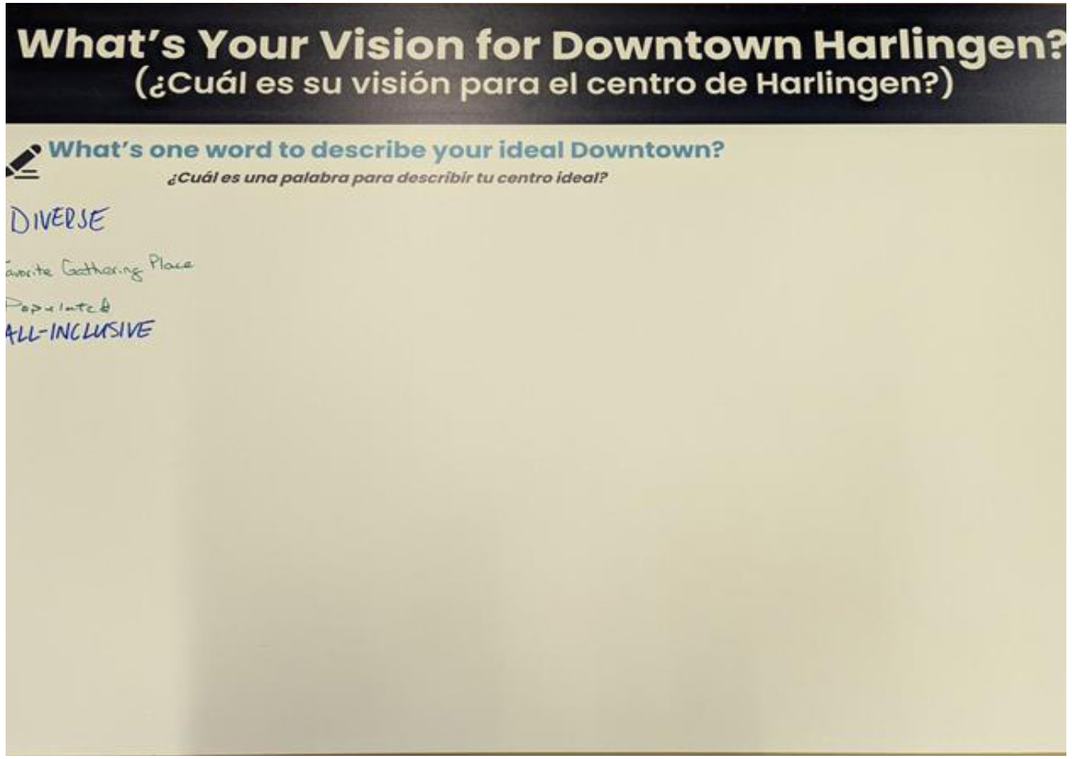
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET THERE?	MODE OF TRANSPORTATION			
DESTINATION	Drive	Walk	Bike	Bus
Work	3	0	0	1
Shopping & Groceries	3	0	1	1
Schools	1	0	0	1
Parks & Trails	2	1	1	1



Participants at the engagement event live throughout the City of Harlingen. They primarily travel to destinations along major thoroughfares such as Highway 83 and Commerce St.



Two streets were identified as needing improvements: N Commerce St and what appears to be Haverford Blvd.



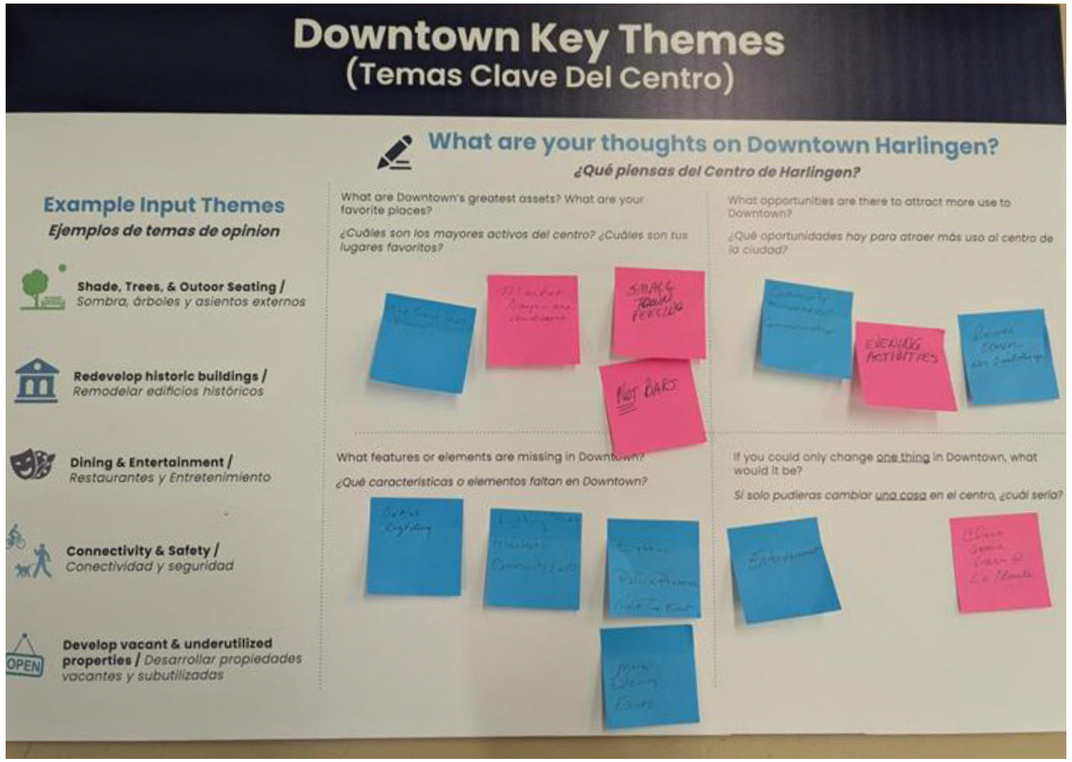
Responses indicate a desire for a vibrant and lively Downtown where people of all ages and abilities can gather.

What's Your Vision for Downtown Harlingen?

Responses

What's one word to describe your ideal Downtown?

- Diverse
- Favorite Gathering Place
- Populated
- All-Inclusive



Residents love Downtown Harlingen's small town feel and community events like Market Days. There is a desire to enhance the area's nightlife with more events taking place during the evening as well as better lighting to improve safety at night.

Downtown Key Themes

Responses

What are Downtown's greatest assets? What are your favorite places?

- The small town flavor
- Market Days are awesome
- Small town feel
- NOT bars

What opportunities are there to attract more use to Downtown?

- Community Awareness/Communication
- Evening Activities
- Lower taxes on buildings

What features or elements are missing from Downtown?

- Better Lighting
- Lighting, markets, community events
- Lighting, police presence, nighttime events
- More evening events

If you could only change one thing in Downtown, what would it be?

- Entertainment
- Close bars at La Placita



Participants identified several types of land uses they wish to see in Downtown Harlingen including mixed-use residential, restaurants, and bars.

Downtown Land Uses & Development

Responses

Residential Types

- Mixed-Use w/ Residential

Commercial Types

- Restaurant
- Restaurants and Bars
- Boutique Retail

Other

- Live, eat, have a small park Downtown, already prime for it



Lighting was identified as the primary sidewalk improvement needed in Downtown Harlingen with a preference for solar lighting. Commerce Street was identified for potential street improvements. Strategies like alley activation can be used to enhance public gathering spaces.

Downtown Streetscape & Public Spaces

Responses

Sidewalk Improvements

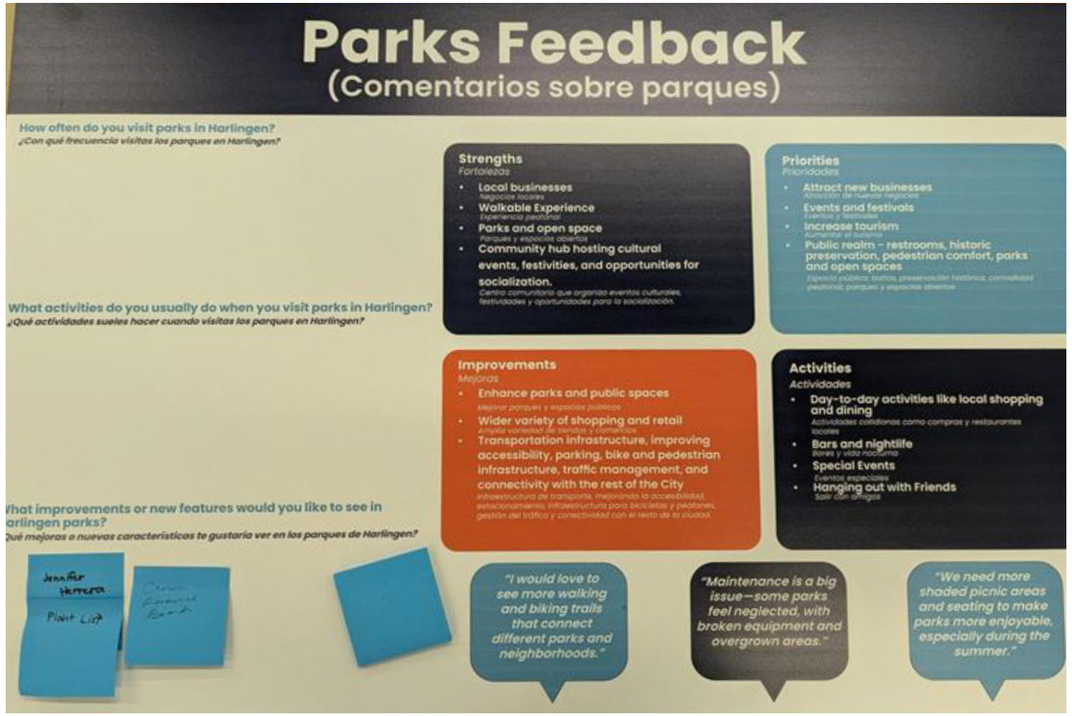
- Safer Lighting
- Solar Lighting

Street Improvements

- Commerce Street

Public Gathering Spaces

- Alley Activation
- White with stadium as a concert venue





Parks Feedback

Responses

How often do you visit parks in Harlingen?

- N/A

What activities do you usually do when you visit parks in Harlingen?

- N/A

What improvements or new features would you like to see in Harlingen Parks?

- Plant List - Jennifer Herrara
- Cannot read

Two responses were left on the "Park Experience" engagement board. Guiterrez Park was identified as needing improvements. Although there is not a park labeled on the map, a dot was placed close to Highway 83 on the Westside of Harlingen, indicating where the participants would love to see new amenities.



Bass Blvd to Alto Palmas Rd are used to access parks on the Westside of Harlingen, although one participant pointed out that the Westside is cut off on the map.



The top amenity needed in Harlingen's park system are trails for walking a bicycling. Other amenities like a sports courts, picnic pavilions, and restrooms are missing from some of the city's parks.

What is Missing in Your Parks?

Responses

WHAT TYPES OF PARK AMENITIES ARE MOST NEEDED IN HARLINGEN?	# OF DOTS
Playgrounds	0
Picnic Pavilion	1
Sports Courts	1
Water Features	0
Community Gardens	0
Walking & Biking Trails	3
Athletic Field	0
Shade Equipment	0
Support Facilities (trash cans, benches, etc.)	0
Restrooms	1

Public Engagement #3

On June 3, 2025 at 6pm at the Casa de Amistad the planning team held its third community engagement event. The meeting was hosted by the City of Harlingen and facilitated by Freese & Nichols, the City's consultant. 14 participants signed in on the meeting sign in sheets. Advertisements were made via the City's communication channels, social media, and the project website. Advertisements and all meeting materials were made available in both English and Spanish.

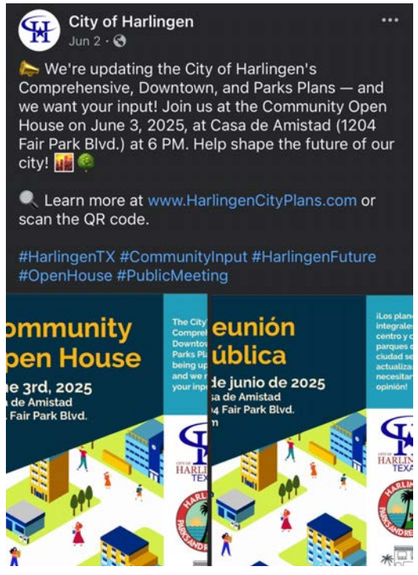
The purpose of this event was to present and discuss Comprehensive Plan recommendations and to generate additional thoroughfare map feedback. The evening began with a formal presentation by the consultant team, followed by an open house with interactive stations and one on one conversations with the participants. City staff were also in attendance and available to talk with residents.

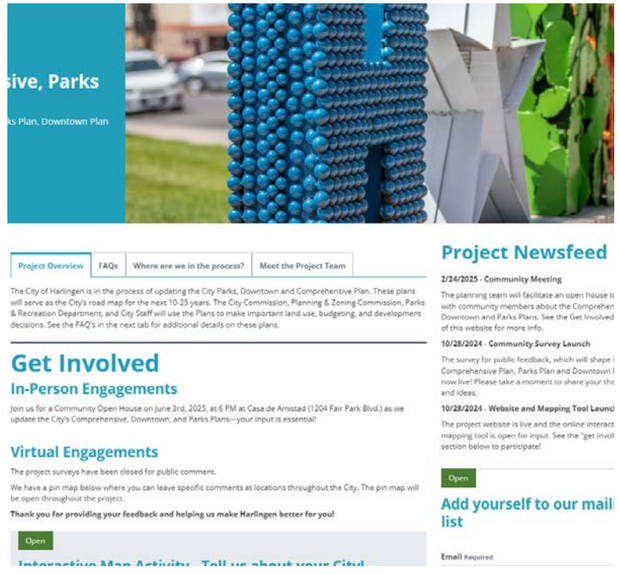
The meeting agenda included:

- Project and Process Overview
- Review of Community Feedback
- Key Takeaways from Assessments
- Next Steps
- Open House Activities (Interactive Stations)

The interactive stations topics included:

- Project and Website Information
- Draft Vision and Goals
- Plan Recommendations (Land Use, Housing, Infrastructure, and Economics)
- Transportation Feedback
- Downtown and Parks Plan Feedback





A screen capture of the meeting advertisement on the City's Facebook page and the meeting information on the project website.



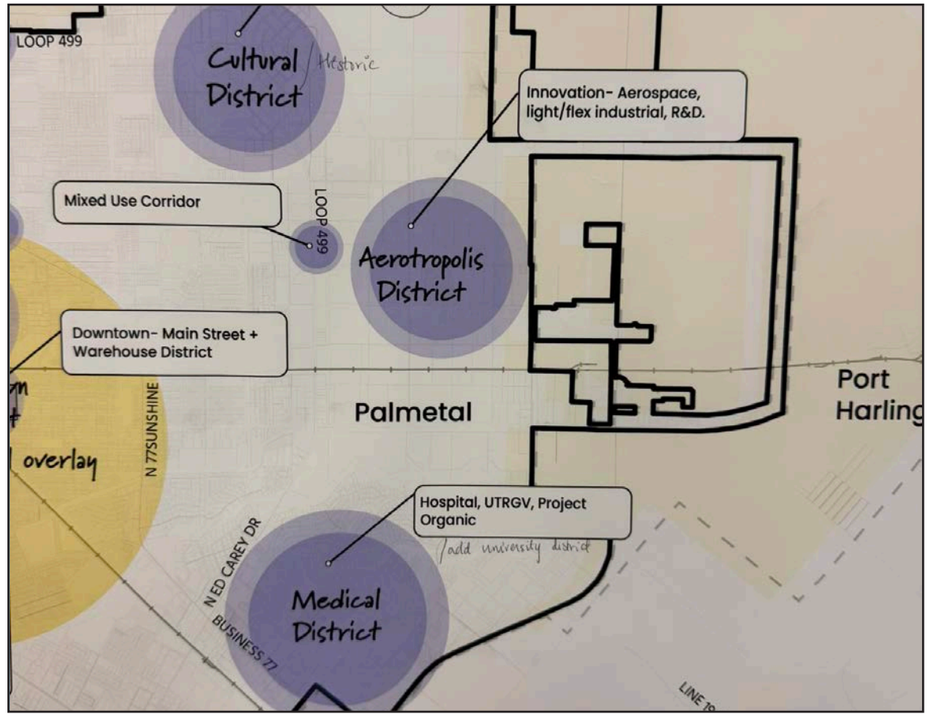








Images from the public meetings in June 2025. Top row: the presentation done by the consultant team. Middle and bottom rows: the interactive stations and one-on-one conversations.



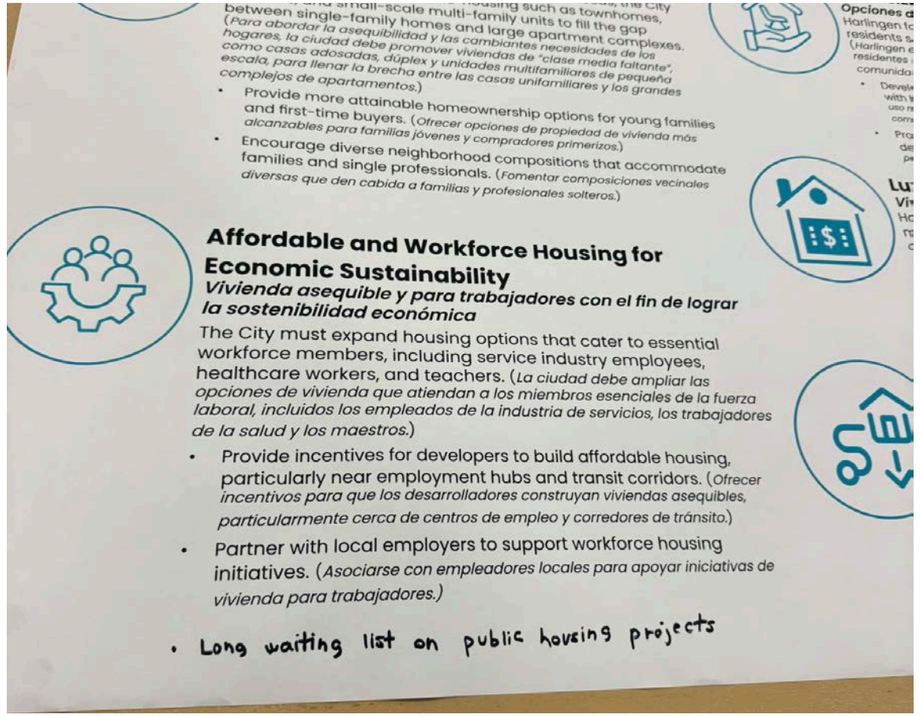
Responses indicate a desire to rename the Cultural District to the Cultural Historic District as well as to rename the Medical District to the Medical University District.

Land Use Districts

Responses

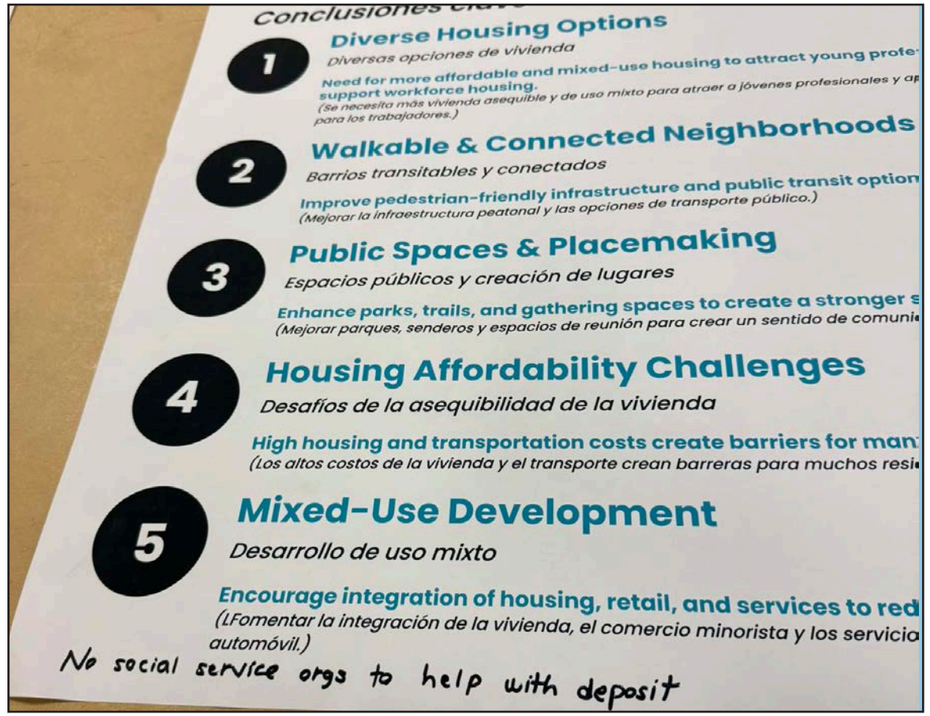
Cultural Historic District

Medical University District



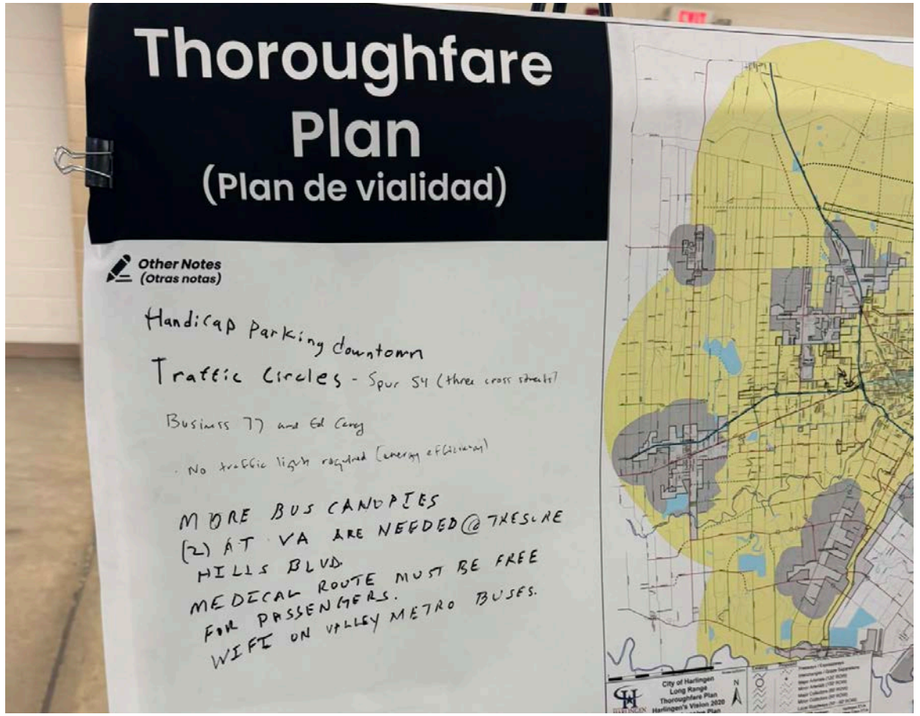
A response was received indicating that strategies need to be developed by the City to address the long waiting list for public housing projects in Harlingen.

Housing Needs and Strategies



A response was received indicating that the City needs to develop social service organizations to help with owner/rental housing deposit assistance.

Housing Assessment



Participants identified the need to supply additional handicapped parking in Downtown Harlingen, utilize traffic circles around the City and develop additional bus shade canopies specifically on stops at Treasure Hills Blvd.

Thoroughfare Plan

Responses

Handicap parking downtown

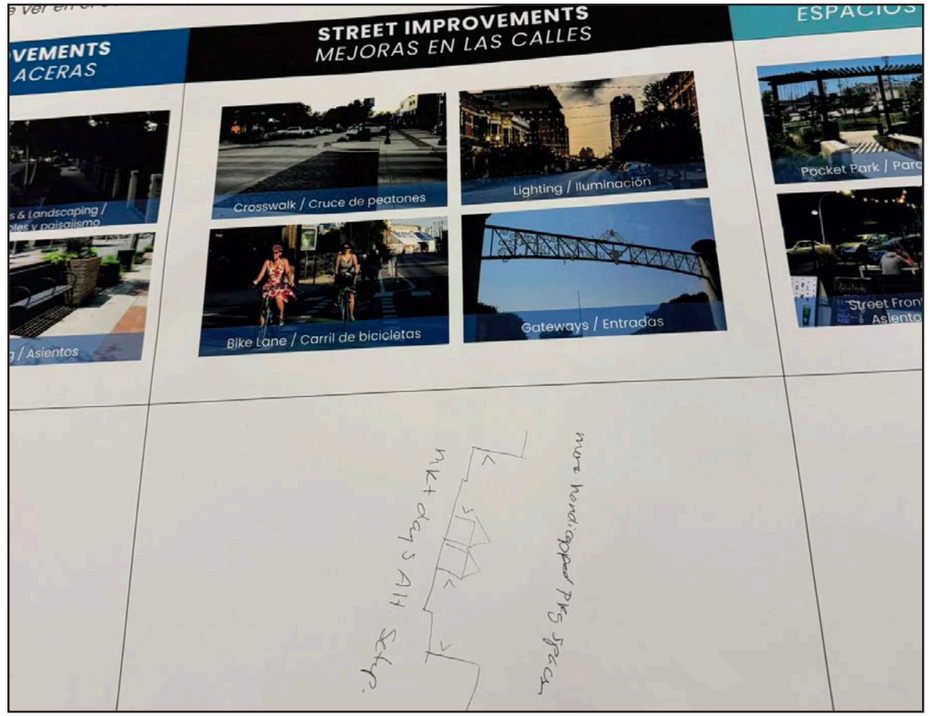
Traffic circles - Spur 54 (three cross streets)

Business 77 and Ed Carey - No traffic light required (energy efficiency)

More bus canopies - (2) at VA are needed at Treasure Hills Blvd

Medical route must be free for passengers

Wifi on Valley Metro Buses



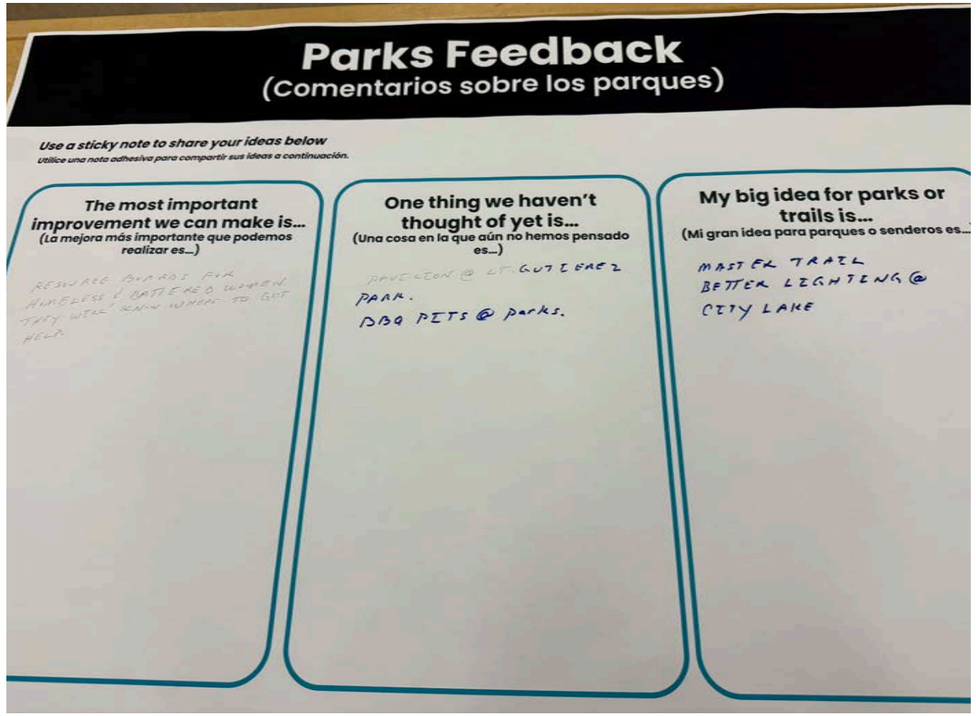
Participants indicated an alternative Market Days vendor set-up to better highlight existing businesses as well as the need for more handicapped parking.

Downtown Streetscape & Public Spaces

Responses

More handicapped parking spaces

Alternative Market Days set-up



Responses included the need for an improved pavilion at Gutierrez Park, more BBQ pits across all parks, the development of a Master Trail Plan, and the improvement of lighting at Lake Harlingen.

Parks Feedback

Responses

The most important improvement we can make is....

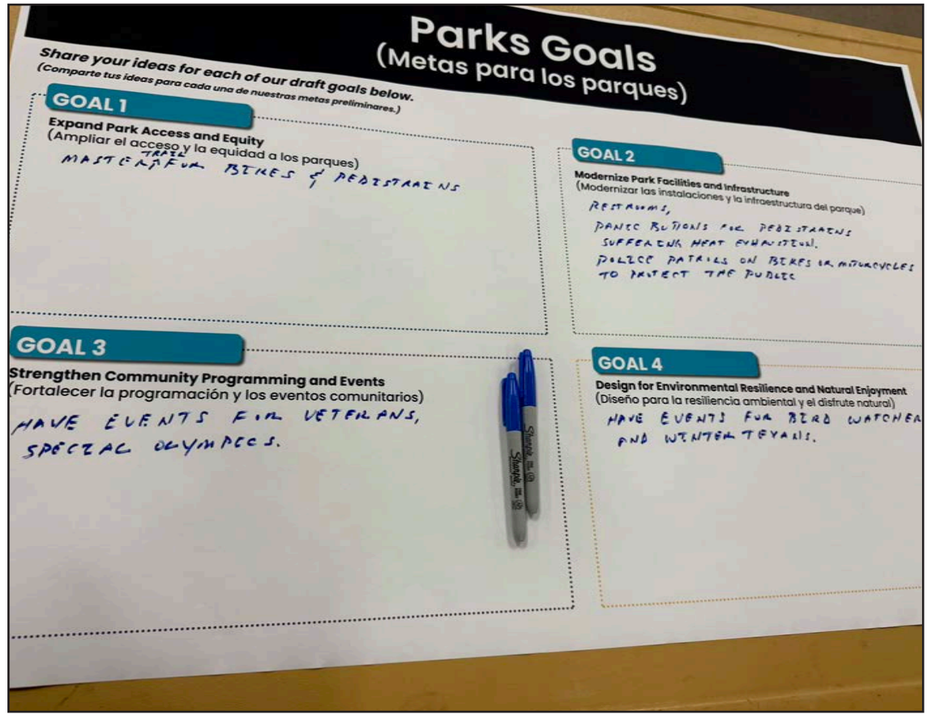
- Resource boards for homeless and battered women, they will know where to get help.

One thing we haven't thought of yet is....

- Pavilion at Gutierrez Park
- BBQ pits at parks

My big idea for parks or trails is....

- Master Trail Plan
- Better lighting at Lake Harlingen



Goals identified by event participants include the development of trails able to accommodate both bikes and pedestrians, the construction of additional restrooms and the deployment of bike-based police patrols within the City's Park systems.

Parks Goals

Responses

Goal 1

- Master Trail for bikes and pedestrians

Goal 2

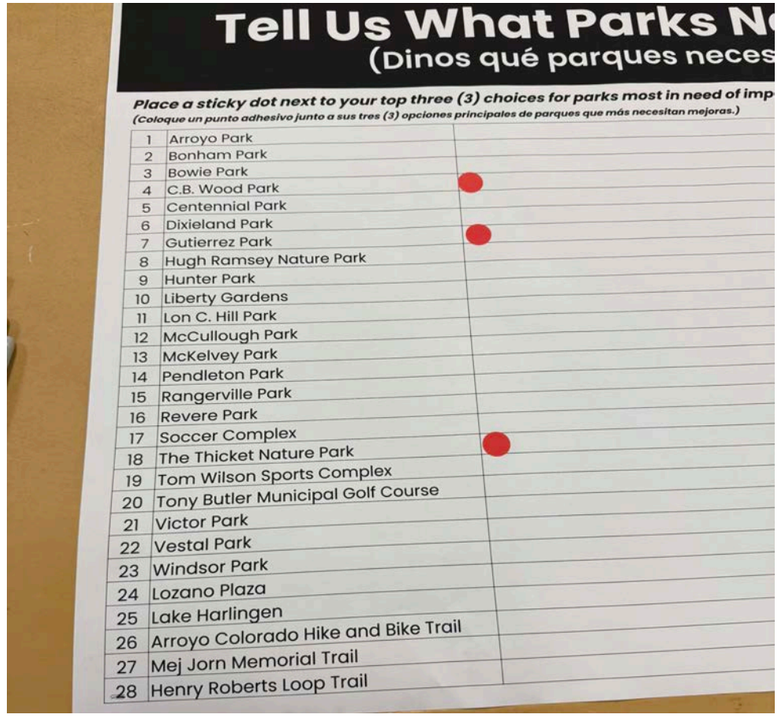
- Restrooms, panic buttons for pedestrians suffering heat exhaustion.
- Police patrols on bikes or motorcycles to protect the public.

Goal 3

- Have events for veterans and host Special Olympics.

Goal 4

- Have events for bird watchers and winter Texans.



Parks identifed as most need of improvement include: C.B. Wood Park, Gutierrez Park and the Thicket Nature Park.

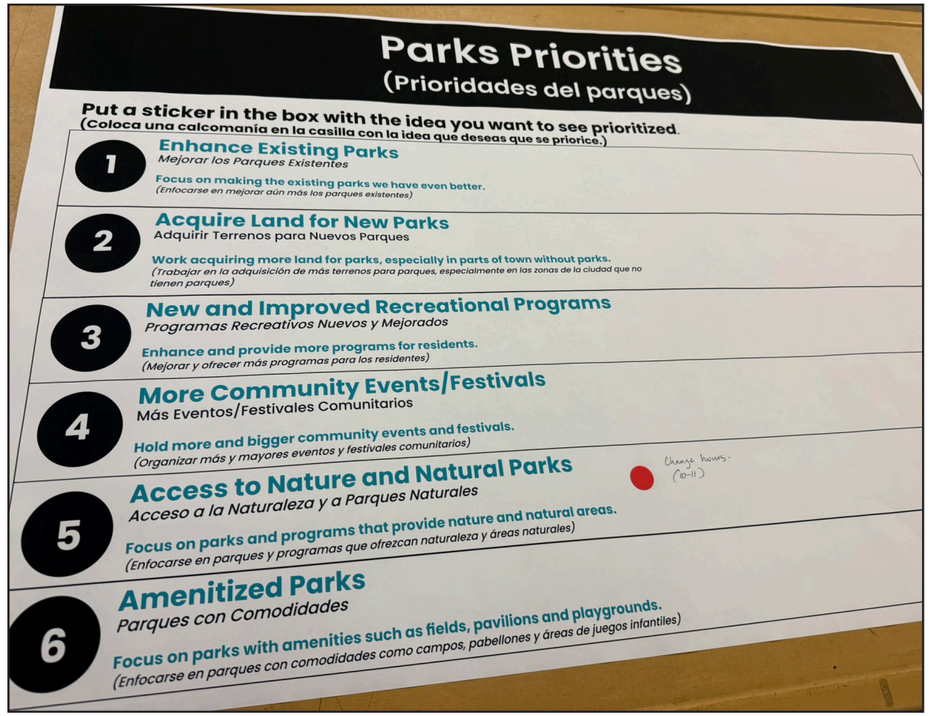
Tell Us What Parks Need Attention

Responses

C.B. Wood Park: 1 Dot

Gutierrez Park: 1 Dot

The Thicket Nature Park: 1 Dot



A response identifed a need to update the hours for access to nature parks in Harlingen to 10AM to 11PM.

Parks Priorities

Responses

Access to Nature and Natural Parks

- Change Hours (10AM to 11PM)