

Madison Heights Master Plan



Introduction

With the Madison Heights Master Plan, Amherst County is creating a blueprint for the future of the Madison Heights area bounded by the James River, US 29 Business, US 29 Bypass, and Rt. 130. The purpose of this Master Plan is to reinforce the area’s sense of community, improve quality of life, expand public services, and increase economic development through future growth. This yearlong planning process began in the winter of 2022 and will create a long-term vision that the County will use to plan for growth and improvement in the coming years.

The ideas and opinions of Madison Height community members are critical to the success of this plan, as well as to a successful future for this important area. County leaders, staff, and plan consultants have included a variety of community engagement opportunities in the Madison Heights Master Plan process, including a project website (www.envisionmadisonheights.com) providing updated project information, one text-based survey and one map-based survey early in the process, a series of individual meetings with local leaders and stakeholders to gather input, and a concluding public open house to present and vet the draft Master Plan.

Contents

This document summarizes the results of early-process community engagement in the Madison Heights Master Plan through engagement activities that have included:

- **Madison Heights Vision Survey** – an online survey conducted between April 15th and June 20th, 2022 receiving a total of 551 responses.
- **Madison Heights Interactive Mapping Tool** – an online map activated between April 15th and June 20th, 2022 for collaborative identification of preservation, land use, safety, redevelopment, and connection issues generating 175 issues or ideas.
- **Stakeholder Meetings** – a series of open-forum meetings between County staff and plan consultants and a variety of local stakeholders including the County’s Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission, property owners, VDOT officials, business owners, churches, and many others. Meetings were held on a variety of dates between May 17th and June 13th, 2022.

Community Engagement Highlights

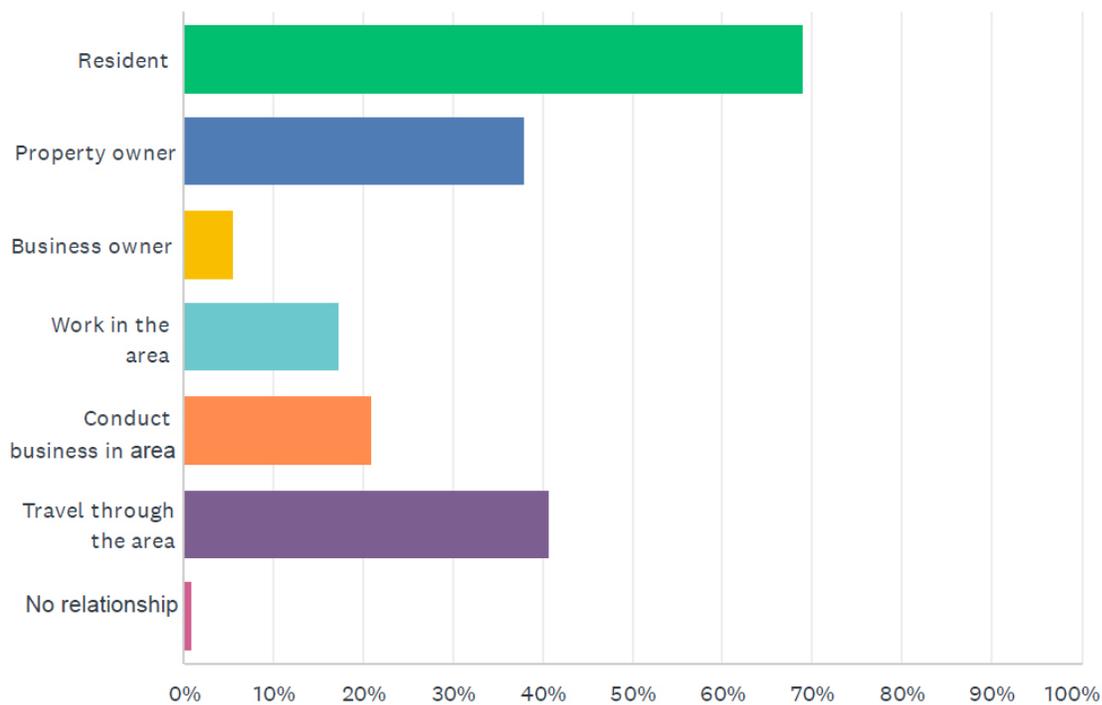
Community engagement participants returned a wide variety of feedback that will remain critical to the completion of a Madison Heights Master Plan. Overall highlights and observations on community opinion across all engagement activities are summarized below:

- The combined engagement activities reached achieved a large sample of community input relative to similar efforts led by local staff and the consultant team. Participants represented a wide variety of interests and came from both inside and outside of the Madison Heights area.
- Participants generally supported future growth and development in Madison Heights, including the potential development of a town center area. While some support for new residential was shown, the greatest desires were expressed for shopping, entertainment, and restaurant uses.
- Engagement Responses showed relatively minor concerns with the existing function of Route 29 Business but concern that future growth in the area could lead to traffic congestion or safety issues. An ongoing corridor study continues to work to address such issues.
- While most participants view the Madison Heights area as necessarily automobile-centric, some expressed interest in expansion of public transit and pedestrian options such as sidewalks and pedestrian lighting as the area grows in the future. Existing business owners generally saw little transit benefit.
- Participants expressed a general concern about the aesthetics of the area as it currently exists, including dilapidated or abandoned buildings and businesses (such as vape shops) that occupy a low-market or low-value position. Additionally, business owners noted that the lower average incomes in this area limit business expansion, recruitment, and retention.
- Retail and service development was strongly supported among participants, including preserving existing businesses and attracting new ones that elevate the market position of Madison Heights.
- Desire was expressed in many areas to preserve the small town feel and natural features of Madison Heights, even as growth and development take place. Preservation would save green space and respect private property rights as well as improve the aesthetics of roadways with plantings and other improvements.
- Business owners expressed general confidence in the availability of utilities for business expansion, aside from a growing need for broadband internet service that is increasingly seen as necessary to any development.
- Participants expressed a desire for community amenities that could include trails, parks, or facilities such as a YMCA to meet the needs of resident families now and in the future.

Madison Heights Vision Survey

The Madison Heights Vision Survey was conducted online between April 15th and June 20th, 2022 to gauge local opinion on the conditions and needs of the Madison Heights area. The survey was open to all participants and was available on the project website and promoted by County staff through social media and other existing methods. The survey collected 551 total responses. In addition to general public questions on vision and needs, a subset of questions for Madison Heights area business owners collected further information on local business needs and development.

Question 1: What is your relationship to the Madison Heights Area?

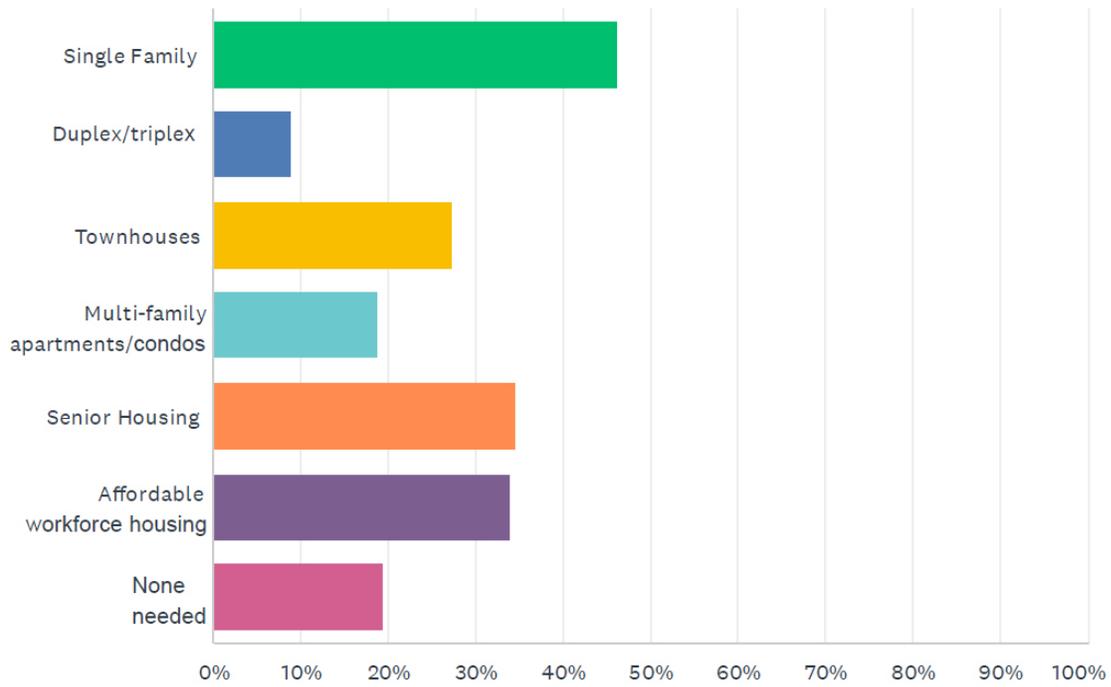


Question 2: In your opinion, how important are the following elements to consider in the creation of a master plan for Madison Heights?

	1 LEAST IMPORTANT	2	3	4	5 MOST IMPORTANT
a. Attractive streetscapes and gateways	5.50%	11.01%	27.16%	32.66%	23.67%
b. Parks, Greenways, and Trails	6.42%	8.62%	23.67%	31.56%	29.72%
c. Preserving existing businesses	5.87%	8.44%	25.50%	29.72%	30.46%
d. New Village Center	8.89%	9.81%	25.93%	28.89%	26.48%
e. Transportation improvements for safety and mobility	5.72%	11.07%	28.04%	27.12%	28.04%
f. New Residential development	19.22%	17.93%	27.36%	19.41%	16.08%
g. New Shopping development	6.79%	6.42%	13.76%	29.17%	43.85%
h. New Corporate / Professional Office development	14.66%	16.14%	29.13%	21.89%	18.18%
i. New Manufacturing / Technology development	10.46%	14.50%	20.73%	27.71%	26.61%
j. New entertainment uses	6.93%	5.66%	17.34%	29.74%	40.33%
k. Preservation of Open Space	6.48%	13.70%	27.22%	23.89%	28.70%
l. Walkability	15.58%	16.33%	26.16%	22.45%	19.48%
m. Other (please specify)	18.59%	3.02%	6.53%	8.54%	63.32%

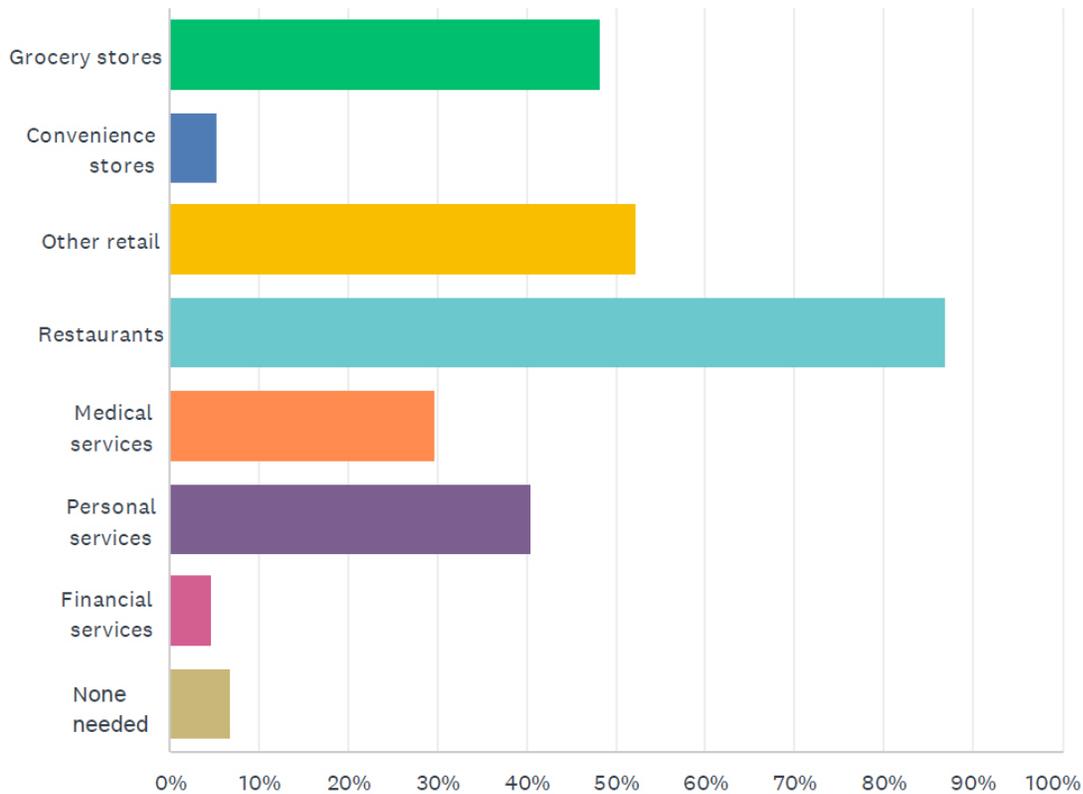
- Respondents expressed a strong desire for a greater variety of restaurants, as well as more entertainment and shopping options. Several comments indicated a need for more “family” or “sit-down” restaurants.
- Revitalization was also a major theme. A number of comments referenced a desire to improve the appearance of the area by addressing abandoned or blighted buildings and cleaning up trash.
- Many respondents commented that they would like to see more recreational facilities such as gyms (especially a YMCA), parks, and playgrounds in the area. Several survey participants would also like to see more family-friendly events such as festivals take place in the area.
- Some respondents are very concerned that the county will “steal” private property via eminent domain and are strongly opposed to the practice.
- Other recurring themes included:
 - Attracting new businesses and creating jobs
 - Bringing more grocery stores (especially Kroger) to the area
 - Providing more bicycle and walking trails
 - Enhanced recreational river access

Question 3: What type of residential development do you think is needed in the Madison Heights area?



- Many respondents were opposed to additional residential development in the area.
- A handful of survey participants expressed support for more senior housing, affordable housing, luxury apartments, and single-family residences.

Question 4: What type of shopping or service uses do you think are needed in the Madison Heights area?



- Grocery stores, retail, restaurants, and entertainment were the most common response categories.
- Many respondents mentioned Kroger as their preferred grocery store option.
- Clothing stores were the most commonly requested retail options.
- Restaurant requests included “family restaurants”, steakhouses, Olive Garden, Starbucks, and Chick-fil-A. Some respondents indicated that there are too many fast food restaurants in the area and not enough “sit-down” options.
- A few participants expressed support for “gaming centers” like Rosie’s Gaming Emporium.

Question 5: What traffic or transportation issues/concerns do you observe in the Madison Heights area?

- Congestion, especially on Route 29, was the most frequently cited transportation issue.
- The second-most common response category was “none”. Many respondents are satisfied with current traffic conditions.
- Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of traffic lights in the area, as well as the timing of traffic lights.
- Some participants indicated a need for more robust pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Several respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the frequency and range of public transportation in the area.
- Safety issues were also a common theme. Areas of note included:
 - Intersections around Walmart, Lowe’s, and CVS
 - Median turn lanes
 - The intersection of Route 29 and Route 130
- Several respondents indicated concerns about speeding and lack of traffic enforcement in the area.

Question 6: What would you like to see changed in Madison Heights in the future?

- The responses to this question were similar to responses to Question 2
- Restaurants/Entertainment/Shopping and Revitalization were the most common response categories by far (152 and 140 responses, respectively)
 - Respondents expressed a strong desire for a greater variety of restaurants, retail shops, and entertainment options.
 - Many participants indicated that the area has a “run-down” feel with too many abandoned/blighted buildings, car washes, gas stations, and litter.
- Economic Development was also a major concern. Many survey participants asked for more businesses, jobs, and general economic growth.
- Community resources such as gyms, parks, and playgrounds, as well as family-friendly events, were frequently requested by survey participants.
- Other themes included:
 - A need for more bicycle and pedestrian facilities
 - Preservation of “small town feel” and improvement of the community’s reputation
 - Concerns about drug use in the area
 - Preservation of green spaces and natural resources
 - Better access to high-quality food (more grocery stores)
 - Improved utility services and hidden power lines
 - Less traffic
 - More robust public transportation

Question 7: What would you like to see preserved about Madison Heights in the future?

- The most common response categories for this question were:
 - Natural Features (green spaces, parks, and river access)
 - Community Character (rural, small-town feel)
 - Existing Businesses (especially La Carreta and other local businesses)
 - History/Buildings (especially Olde Town)
 - Nothing
- Several respondents also mentioned private property concerns and opposition to eminent domain in their responses to this question.

Question 8: What else should we consider for Madison Heights in this plan?

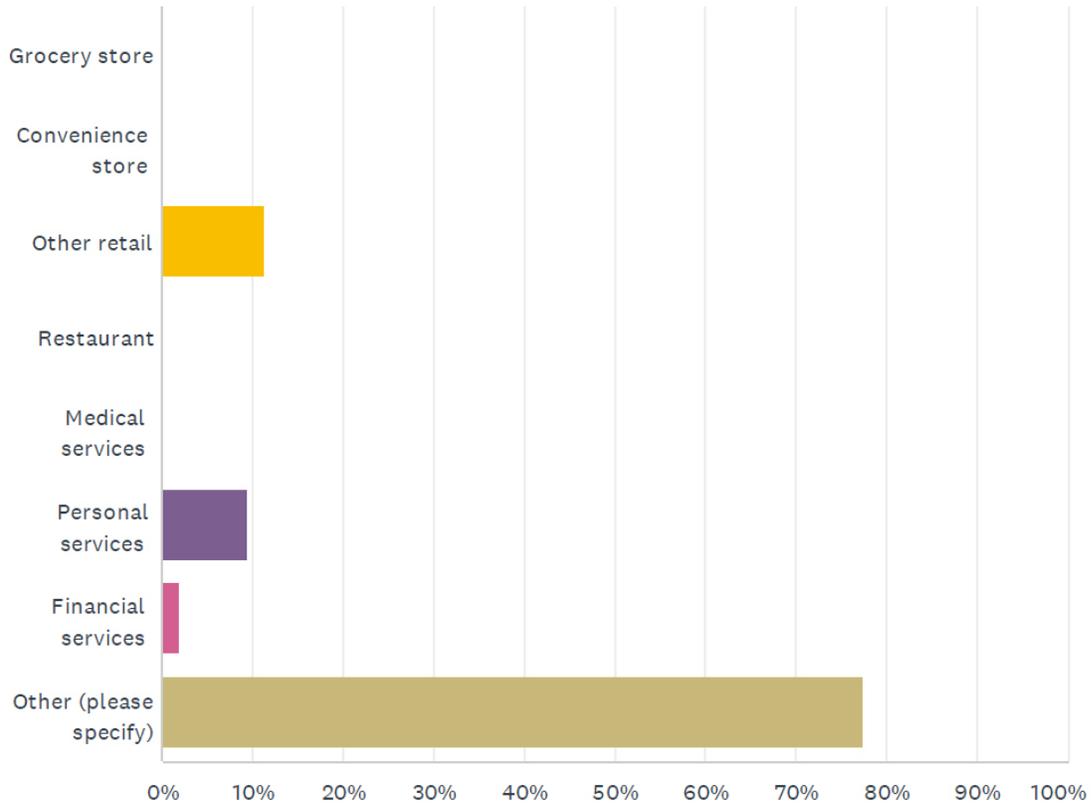
- The responses to this question were very similar to the responses to Question 2 and Question 6. The most common response categories were:
 - Recreation/Community Resources
 - Restaurants/Entertainment/Shopping
 - Revitalization
 - Economic Development
- Other themes not covered in Questions 2 or 6 included:
 - Community engagement
 - Additional schools to support a growing community
 - Better lodging options
 - More affordable housing
 - Better access to healthcare

Question 9: Are you a business owner?

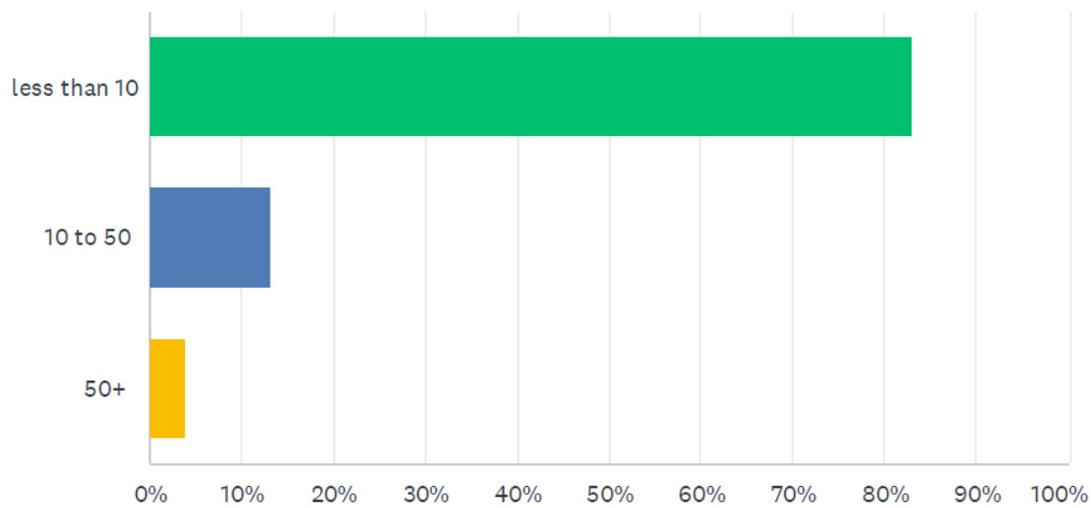
Yes: 11.82%

No: 88.18%

Question 10: What type of business do you have?



Question 11: How many employees does your business have?

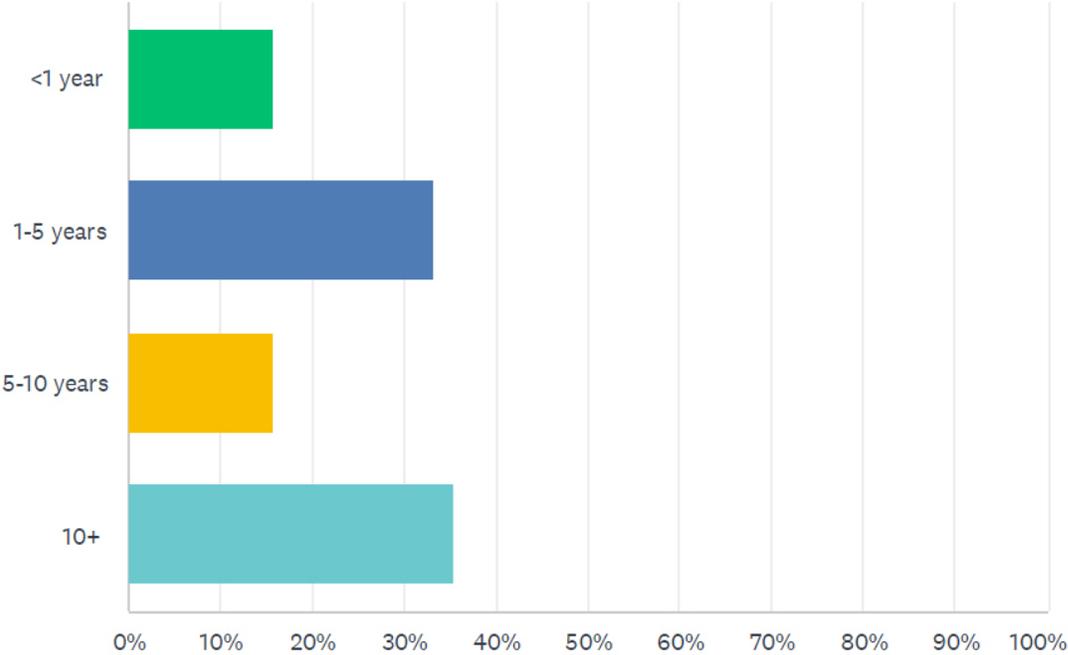


Question 12: Are you locally owned or a franchise?

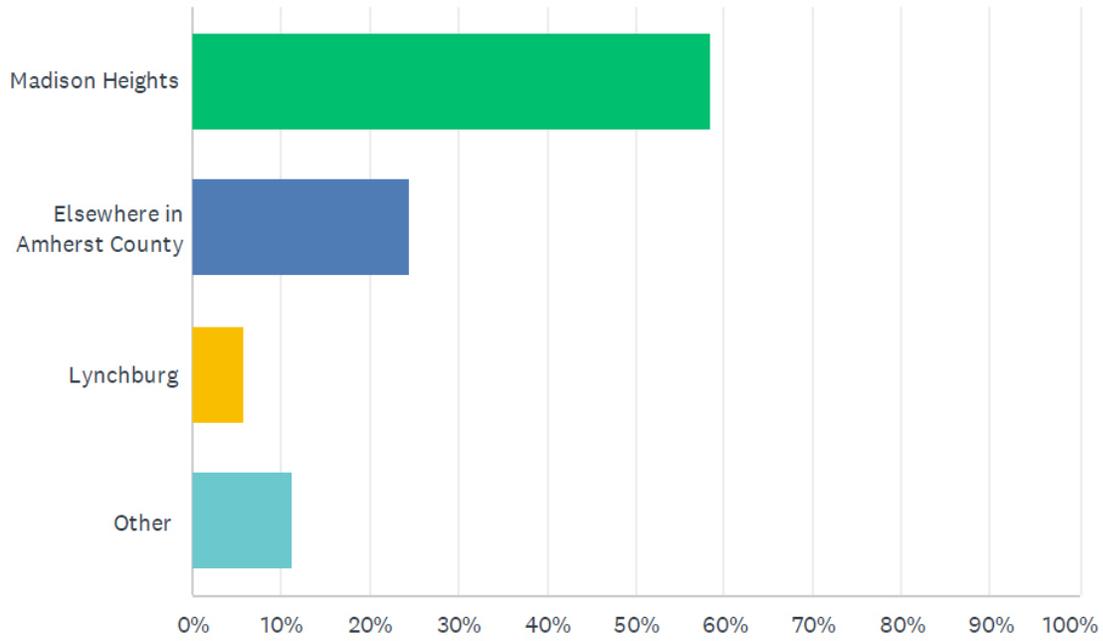
Local: 96.15%

Franchise: 3.85%

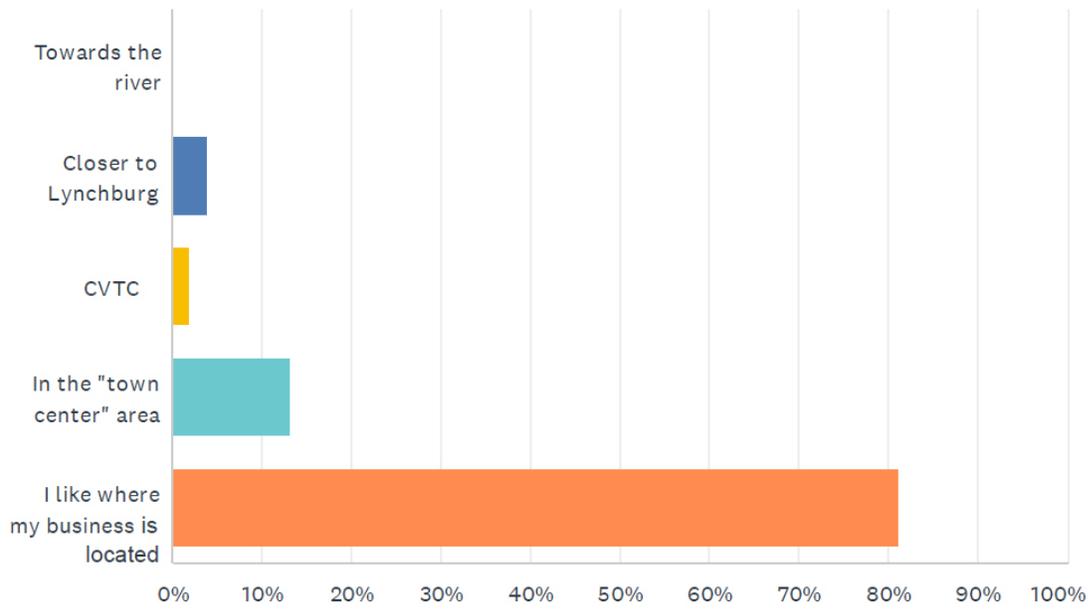
Question 13: How long have you been located in Madison Heights?



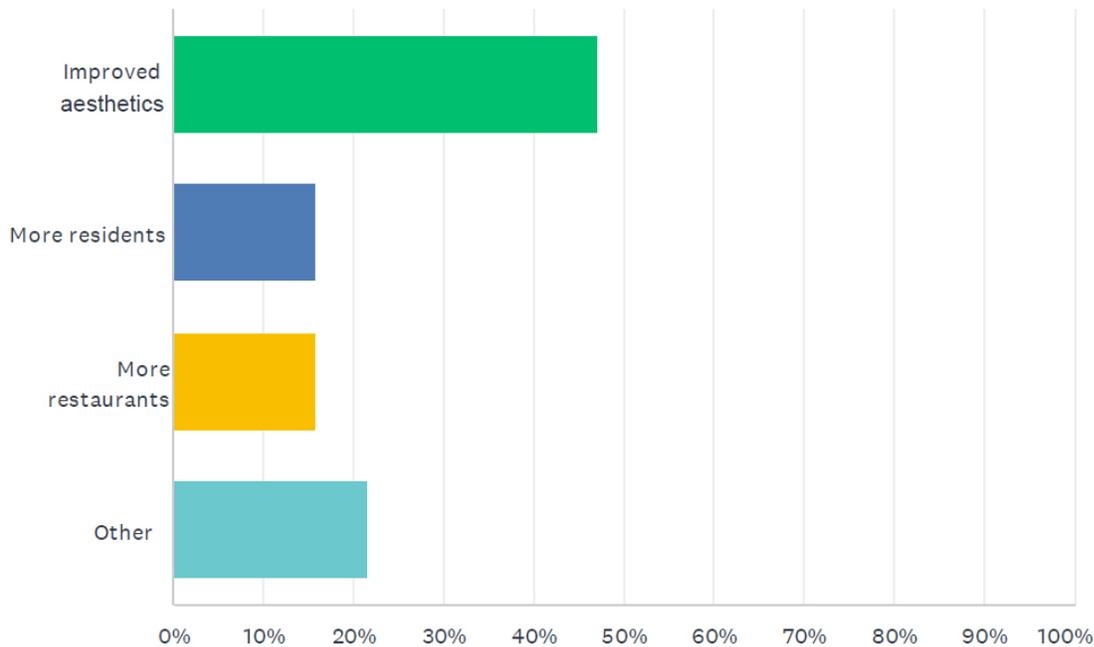
Question 14: Is your business in...



Question 15: Do you feel your business would be better located...



Question 16: What changes in the target area would help your business grow?



Question 17: Would a bus stop near your business be helpful for employees or customers?

Yes: 16.98%

No: 83.02%

Question 18: Do you have the infrastructure in place that you need? If not, what do you need?

- The majority of responses to this question indicated a need for better broadband internet service.
- A handful of comments referenced a desire for better roads and water/sewer infrastructure.

Question 19: Are there any issues impeding your business? If so, please explain.

- Most comments indicated that there were no issues.
- Some participants expressed concerns about existing utilities (especially broadband), a low-income population, and a lack of skilled employees.

Question 20: What other concerns or issues would you like to address?

- Responses to this question were limited, but themes included:
 - Crime enforcement
 - Support for local businesses
 - Road and sidewalk improvements
 - Community revitalization
 - A need for more family-friendly recreation options

Question 21: Is there anything about the current state of the target area that is negatively impacting your business growth or discouraging your business from adding a location in the target area?

- Most participants responded “no” to this question.
- Other responses referenced:
 - Drug use
 - A high poverty rate
 - Lack of available commercial buildings
 - A need for improvements to road conditions

Madison Heights Interactive Mapping Tool

The Madison Heights Interactive Mapping Tool was an online map hosted through the Social Pinpoint service allowing users to drag virtual pins onto a map. Five types of pins were provided, through which users could mark the location of areas or features they wish to see preserved, ideas for land uses, locations of safety or traffic concerns, areas for redevelopment, and areas needing better connections. In total, 175 issues or ideas were submitted to the map. Submitted responses could be viewed by subsequent users, with users also able to upvote or downvote other users' submissions.

While the interactive map is closed to new responses, existing responses remain viewable, and can be explored at <https://eprpc.mysocialpinpoint.com/madison-heights-master-plan#/>.

Responses to the Social Pinpoint survey fell under the following five categories. A summary of the most popular responses (ones that received the most "upvotes") is included below.

Idea for a Land Use:

- A downtown area along the James River directly across from downtown Lynchburg with restaurants, entertainment, and shopping options
- A pedestrian crosswalk at the intersection of Route 29 and Route 604
- A YMCA near the intersection of Route 29 and Route 677 or at the Seminole Shopping Center
- Replace Food Lion with Kroger
- Wegmans, Trader Joe's, and Chick-fil-A at the Seminole Shopping Center
- Consider moving the library to a future Madison Heights Town Center in walking distance to residential development
- A family-friendly park near the intersection of S Amherst Highway and Martins Lane
- A whitewater park on the James River
- Improvements to river access and amenities such as rope swings, take-out ramps, a riverside beach, outdoor music venue, restrooms, food, etc.
- A public park near Olde Town
- A pedestrian walkway along the Carter Glass Memorial Bridge
- Improved access to the James River Heritage Trail
- Better river access along the James River Heritage Trail
- Riverfront take-out ramps, breweries, restaurants, etc.

Need for Better Connections:

- A pedestrian walkway connecting the River's Edge park trail system to the Lynchburg trail system creating a "loop"
- Improved access to surrounding areas off the Route 29 bypass through creating more exits
- Better pedestrian & bicycle connections between Madison Heights and Lynchburg than the John Lynch Bridge
- Development of a multimodal trail connection to the James River Heritage Trail

Preserve This:

- Mixed support/opposition (roughly 50/50) for new development along the James River – nearly 20 comments are concentrated in this area. Some want to keep this area residential, voicing strong opposition to eminent domain. Others want to see the development of a park, restaurants, and other recreational amenities.
- Amelon Square Shopping Center
- Amelon Commerce Center
- Amherst County Dixie Girls Softball Association

Redevelop This:

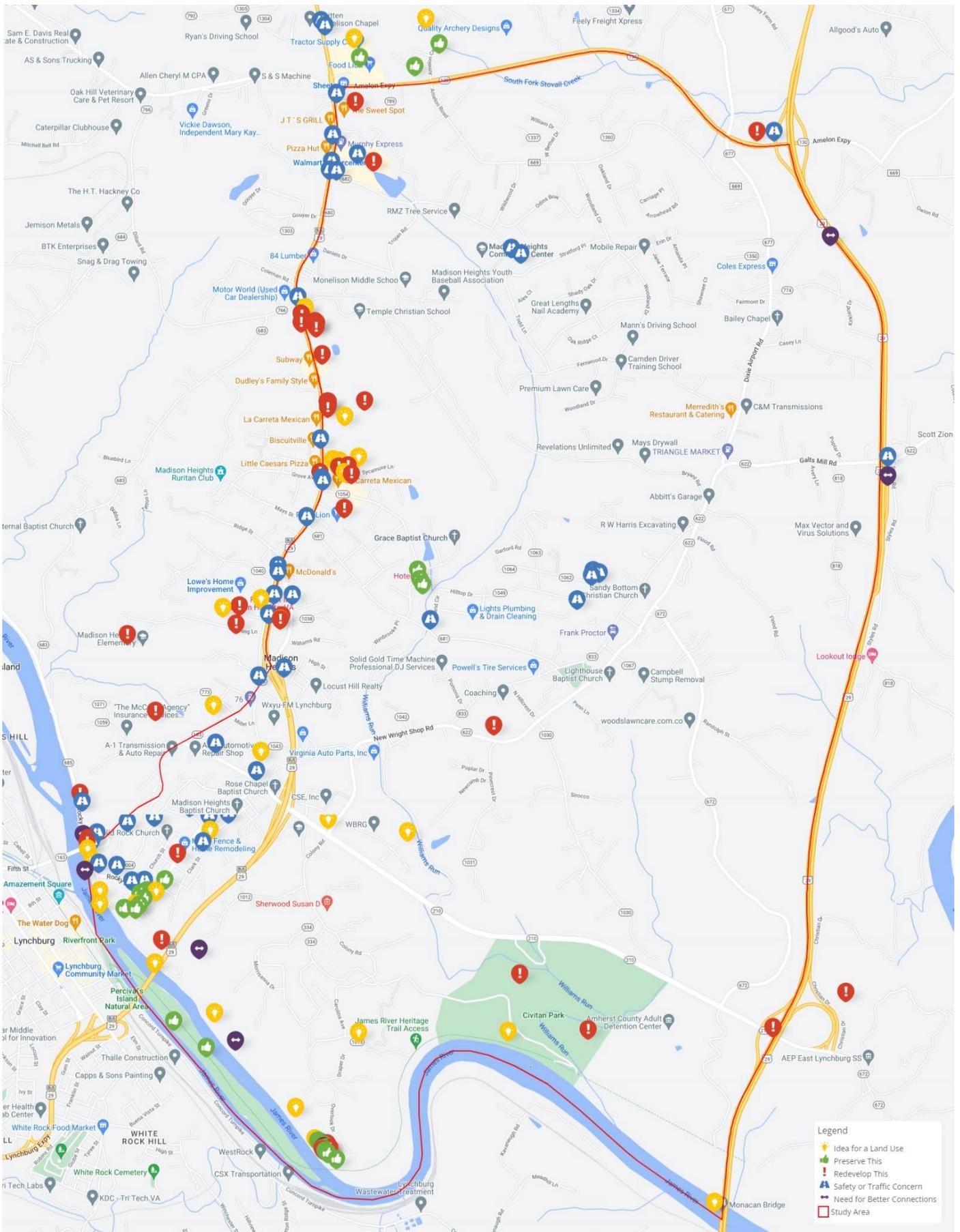
- Improve the appearance and quality of shops at the Seminole Shopping Center
- Concerns about the safety and appearance of motels near S Amherst Highway and S Coolwell Road and off Route 29 (Knights Inn, Executive Inn, Red Roof Inn, etc.)
- The old Anderson’s building near Route 29 and Route 669
- A request to add landscaping/décor off Route 29 near exits leading to business areas to attract visitors
- Dissatisfaction with the shopping center off Route 29 where Matrix Best Vapes is located – respondents want to see “higher end” businesses
- The “one-mile stretch starting at the old A1 camo all the way down to Templeton Christian Church”
- Bury power lines to improve the appearance of the area and remove traffic safety hazards
- Move Food Lion to a new location to improve traffic flow and improve visibility from highway
- Bring a higher-end grocery store to the Lowe’s shopping center or surrounding area
- Widen Rocky Hill Road to improve access to the riverfront
- Add a pedestrian lane to the John Lynch Memorial Bridge
- Bring restaurants/entertainment to the riverfront area near the intersection of S Amherst Highway and Rocky Hill Road
- Connect Riveredge Trail to the James River Heritage Trail
- Encourage an economic development project near Civitan Park and the Amherst County Magistrate’s Office to bring jobs to the area

Safety or Traffic Concern:

- One participant suggested removing traffic lights and replacing them with traffic circles/roundabouts in several locations along Route 29 – these comments received little support and many “downvotes”. In general, many participants are dissatisfied with the timing and placement of traffic lights along Route 29.
- Traffic lights near the intersection of Route 29 and Route 792 need timing adjustments to improve traffic flow
- Reconfigure the parking spaces at the Walmart parking lot to change direction of traffic
- Traffic light at the intersection of S Amherst Highway and Woodys Lake Road (at Walmart) needs timing adjustments to improve traffic flow
- Potholes near the intersection of Route 163 and Riviera Drive need to be repaired
- Potholes on the offramp connecting the Lynchburg Expressway to Route 163 need to be repaired
- Dissatisfaction with the “speed trap” near the intersection of Route 210 and Veterans Passage

- Need for a stop light at the intersection of Route 210 and Main Street
- Potholes on Warwick Street need to be repaired
- Concerns about the safety of 7th street due to poor road conditions and grading
- Landscaping and streetlights needed on Route 163 heading into Madison Heights from the John Lynch Memorial Bridge
- Add a bike lane/pedestrian path to Rocky Hill Road near the John Lynch Memorial Bridge
- The stop sign on Rocky Hill Road near the John Lynch Memorial Bridge needs to be moved for better visibility
- General safety concerns about the condition of Rocky Hill Road

Summary Map of Submitted Pins:



Legend

- Idea for a Land Use
- Preserve This
- Redevelop This
- Safety or Traffic Concern
- Need for Better Connections
- Study Area

Stakeholder Meetings

In addition to the input of the general public through the two survey instruments, the planning process targeted certain local interests whose input was seen as especially critical to the future of Madison Heights. A list of stakeholders was generated by the Madison Heights Master Plan Advisory Committee, and included local elected and appointed leaders, property owners, business owners, church leaders, school administrators, and VDOT officials, among others. Identified stakeholders were invited to meet with County staff and plan consultants in unscripted meetings to ask questions and provide input on the future of Madison Heights.

In each case, consultants offered brief opening comments including a recap of the project purpose and scope, a summary of the roles in the process, and a summary of the project schedule and input opportunities. Many stakeholder conversations also included discussion of the proposed mixed-use development under County considerations for portions of the Core Development Area (Tyler Tracts) referred to as the Patel application.

Meetings were held both virtually and in-person on a variety of dates between May 17th and June 13th, 2022. Summary notes from each stakeholder meeting are presented below.

Project Briefing to the Amherst County Board of Supervisors: *May 17th, 2022*

The Board of Supervisors provided brief comments about issues and opportunities for the project and next steps:

- Public input is very important to this process, especially ensuring that we get good survey responses from a broad cross section of residents and businesses in Madison Heights.
- Specific outreach to property owners in the study area is also important to get their opinions on their desires for their properties as well as for the study area as a whole
- In addition to the importance of the Core Development Area and the Central Virginia Training Center as catalysts for the whole study area, the planners should look at infill opportunities. For example, infill sites along old Wright Shop Rd could spur investment along that corridor.
- A key issue that was emphasized was the revitalization of business 29. Opportunities for access management, greater safety and congestion relief should go hand in hand with opportunities for revitalization of aging commercial structures to create a better gateway for the project as a whole.

Stakeholder Meeting: *May 25th, 2022*

Rick Youngblood (VDOT), Robert Brown (VDOT), David Cook (VDOT), Kelly Hitchcock (Central Virginia Planning District Commission)

- VDOT has made comments on Phase 1 of the Patel proposal; not yet on Phase 2
 - VDOT has met with the applicant and is expecting a full traffic impact analysis
 - A full traffic impact analysis may be 6+ months away
- The Patel proposal includes 3 total intersections on 29, with a stoplight proposed for the southern-most one
- Does Greater Lynchburg Transit serve this area? (Route 5?)

- If so, bus stop improvements would be required for development
- Amherst County submitted for a roundabout at 29 and Amelon road, but VDOT staff find this project unlikely
 - Efforts are underway to revise designs for this area
- Michael Baker is currently finalizing a 29 corridor study
 - This work includes a buildout analysis of the Tyler tracts in its traffic forecasting
 - Study includes grass medians, access management, gateways/roundabouts, and tree/parkway treatments
- Region hopes that this master plan will acknowledge pedestrians in Old Madison Heights who walk to the north
- Region's long-term vision is to connect CVTC to Business 29 with a trail network
 - Federal money may be available for this through Connecting Communities or other programs
- There will be a need for wayfinding to reach Old Town Madison Heights, CVTC, etc.

Stakeholder Meeting: June 1st, 2022

Beverly Jones, Sabrina Kennon, Calvin Kennon, Jennifer Eaton

- Overall supportive of a master plan for Madison Heights
 - Feel that Madison Heights is poised to take advantage of the growth of the Lynchburg area due to its proximity
 - A loyal community will make for good business
- Would like to see a place that feels like the center of a community
 - A place for people to gather
- Potential for a park space at the center
 - Recreation amenities would be welcome, including trails, etc.
 - Feel there is no need for sports fields
 - A YMCA would be a good addition
 - Love the Millar Park pool
- Is there potential to connect the Core Development Area to CVTC and Lynchburg?
- Madison Heights once had more small businesses; chains have now replaced some of these
 - Businesses existed along Wrights Shop Road but closed as 29 became the focus of development
- Existing strip commercial development is an asset, in that it provides goods and services that people need
- There is a general lack of community buy-in in this area
 - Many people think nothing will/can ever happen here
- Need for near-term actions such as landscaping to overcome general pessimism in the community
 - Recent beautification plantings have been great
- In particular, the Madison Heights end of the 5th Street bridge along Route 163 (near Riveredge Park) needs beautification
- Residents consider the Woodland Circle neighborhood to be part of Madison Heights

- Great views are available in many locations

Stakeholder Meeting: June 2nd, 2022

Steve Esterline (Temple Baptist Church), Mike Cook, Victoria Watts, Luther Beverly, William Wells (Amherst County Schools)

- Concern about the impact of housing growth on the County’s school system
 - Some elementary schools are already at capacity
- There is a need for hotels to serve community events
 - Visiting sports teams planning games or tournaments in Amherst must stay in Lynchburg
- Would like to see fewer vape shops on 29
- There was once a train station in Monroe that served as a community center. Could the station be revitalized (*note: the Monroe station is outside of the Madison Heights Master Plan study area*)
- Need for places that serve families, such as restaurants, trails, parks, and other activities
 - Need a more proactive and engaging community center
 - A YMCA would be welcome
- Would like to see a Madison Heights-specific business group like existing Lynchburg Small Business Center, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
 - This organization could serve as a local business coach/incubator
 - Coworking space is also a need for new small businesses
- Can the County provide incentives to renovate businesses or to attract desired businesses like hotels and restaurants?
- Tourism is welcome in Madison Heights and should be encouraged/marketed
- Need bus transportation – there is currently a lack of facilities for those without cars
- Opportunity Zones could provide a source of funding
 - The CVTC site is classified as an Opportunity Zone
- Trails and Parks at CVTC
- Marketing efforts are needed to deal with the stigma that Madison Heights is too far away
- There is a need for pedestrian lighting
 - In locations where sidewalks have been installed
 - On 5th Street and Carter Glass Bridges
- Signs could help to identify and brand the area
- Need for broadband internet
 - County has received \$6 million to support service outside the existing Comcast service area. Fiber will be run to these areas within the next two years

Stakeholder Meeting: June 13th, 2022

Margaret Ellington, Allen Freeman Jr., Richard Jordan, Patricia Jordan, Ronnie Adams, Jason Weber, Susan Murray, Kelly Hitchcock

- Concerned about the connection show between the Patel property and Trojan Road at Monelison Middle School
 - This area can already be very busy at school pickup/drop off times
 - Patel plans show a church here. How will it be accessed? From Trojan Road or from 29 through the balance of the Patel property
 - Concern that use of the proposed church beyond Sunday services (such as private school use) would cause traffic issues
- Concerns for impact of new development on local schools.
 - This area is divided between two existing school districts; Madison Heights and Amelon
- What buffer will be included at the proposed church on the Patel property?
 - Do not want grading and clearing right up to the property line
- The Core Development Area as shown includes some existing single-family homes – a concern for local residents
- General concerns about change, or that property taxes will go up because of growth and development
 - Why develop Madison Heights when Lynchburg still has undeveloped property?
- Some participants in support, but some opposed, to a potential new interchange at Galts Mill Rd (Rt. 622) and 29 Bypass
- A need in this area for additional restaurants
- The Seminole Drive/Lakeview subdivision needs additional access points