

# Urbana North Main Street Corridor Plan

## Community Open House and Survey



### *Community Open House and Survey Summary*

#### Overview

Residents and stakeholders were invited to attend a community open house event on January 18, 2024, to learn about the draft vision statement, goals, and action steps of the North Main Street Corridor Plan. To provide an alternative way to participate, a companion online survey was also published and available January 4 – February 5, 2024. The in-person event and online survey asked residents and stakeholders the same series of questions related to the draft vision, goals, and action steps.

Meeting attendees and online participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the draft materials and provide ideas for new goals and action steps. Ten people attended the in-person event while 94 people responded to the online survey.

#### Vision Statement

The purpose of the plan vision statement is to act as a "north star" for the North Main Street Corridor. A vision statement should be clear, concise, inspiring, and focused on the success of the corridor. A draft vision statement was developed based on community feedback collected at two Steering Committee meetings, a community survey and a public meeting in the fall of 2023, and stakeholder interviews.

Participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following draft vision statement for the corridor: "North Main Street will be a beautiful, vibrant, and walkable community with a mix of businesses and housing that invite visitors and residents to the area."

Most stakeholders agreed with the draft vision statement. At the in-person event, six community members indicated they agreed with the draft vision statement, and four chose to not respond. No meeting attendees disagreed with the draft vision statement. For the online survey all 94 participants responded to the question (Question One). Approximately 83% of respondents agreed with the draft vision statement, 6% agreed but had suggestions, and 11% disagreed with the draft vision statement (**Figure 1**).

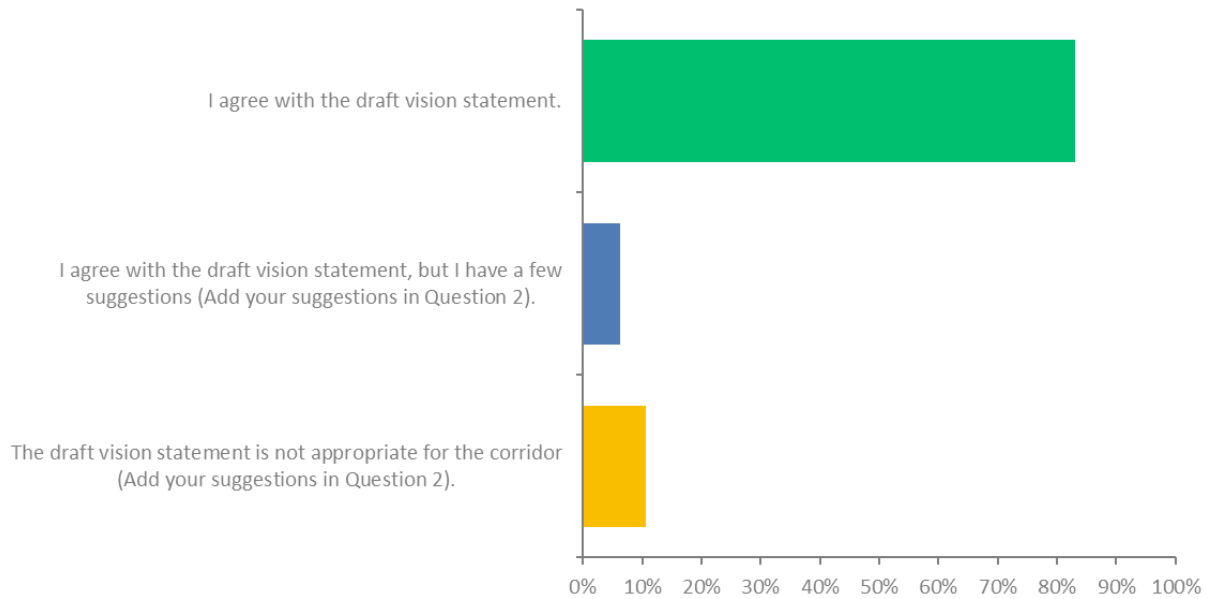


Figure 1 – Percentage of online survey respondents by selection in response to Question 1

Community members provided ideas or suggestions on how to improve the draft vision statement at both the in-person event and via the online survey, including:

- Support for improving the appearance of the northern boundary of the plan area.
- Filling in sidewalk gaps and adding new sidewalks.
- Addressing traffic safety issues in the area.
- Addressing/redirecting large volumes of truck traffic in the area.
- Adding housing and places to shop (i.e. Target)
- Improving the visual appearance of older and vacant/unused buildings.

Online survey respondents that were not in support of the draft vision statement provided the following comments:

- A desire for the area to remain the same with no change.
- A lack of support for additional housing in the area.
- The feeling that the area already meets the vision statement and it is not a vision to work towards as it's already in-place.

## Goals

The goal statements for the North Main Street Corridor Plan were designed to support the vision statement by explaining what needs to be accomplished to achieve the vision for the corridor.

Participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the six provided draft goals in support of the vision statement and given the opportunity to provide additional comments or provide ideas for additional goals. The majority of stakeholders at the in-person meeting and respondents of the online survey agreed with all six of the draft goals.

The draft goals presented at the community meeting and via the online survey included:

- *Draft Goal One: “Establish a mix of uses appropriate for the area including retail shops, restaurants, professional services (medical offices, accountants, etc.), offices, manufacturing, and a variety of housing.”*
- *Draft Goal Two: “Attract and retain a variety of shops and services for residents and visitors.”*
- *Draft Goal Three: Create an environment that is inviting and welcoming to residents and visitors.*
- *Draft Goal Four: Welcome visitors and residents by establishing the corridor as the northern “gateway” to the City of Urbana.*
- *Draft Goal Five: “Encourage redevelopment or reuse of vacant parcels, buildings, and underutilized parking lots to attract new businesses and residents.*
- *Draft Goal Six: Create a walkable and bikeable community that is accessible and easy to navigate for all people and transportation modes including walking, biking, and driving.*

At the in-person event, all the draft goals received between four to eight votes for “agree” and zero votes for “disagree.” Draft goal six received the most votes for “agree” by community members with a total of eight votes. Goals one, two, three, and five all received either five or six votes for “agree,” and four community members selected “agree” for draft goal four.

Similarly, the majority of people who responded online also agreed with the six draft goals. Between 68 – 70 people responded to questions three – eight in the survey with a range of support between 80-93%. For draft goal one, approximately 80% of online survey respondents agreed with the goal, 9% agreed but had suggestions, and 11 % disagreed with the first draft goal (**Figure 2**).

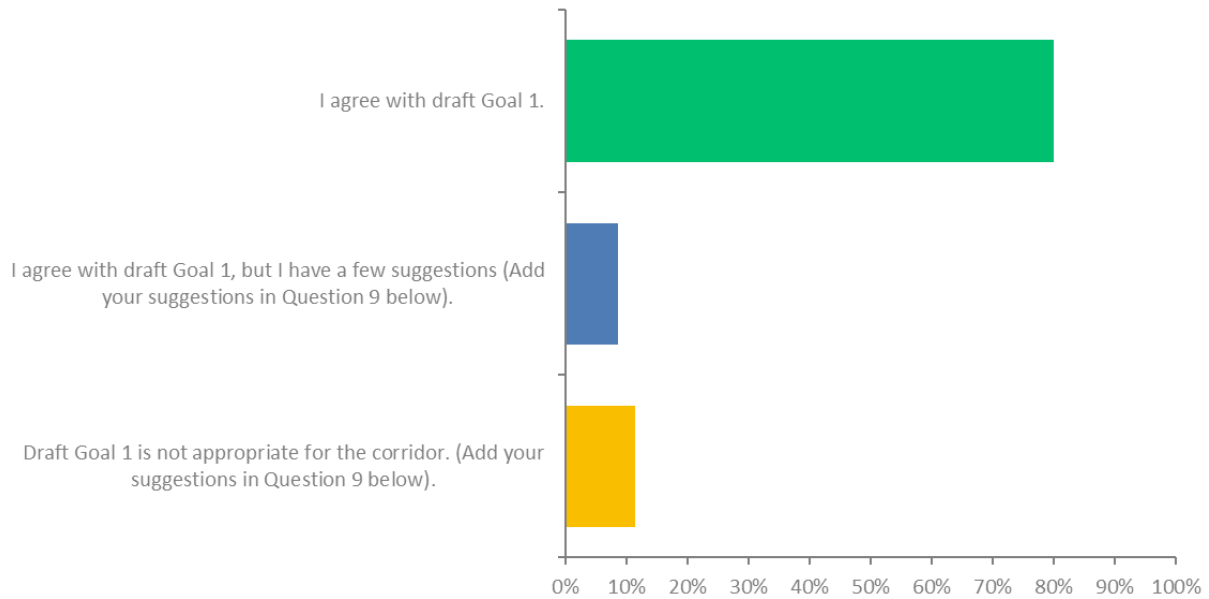


Figure 2 - Percentage of online survey respondents by selection in response to Question 3

For draft goal two, approximately 90% of online survey respondents agreed with the goal, 3% agreed but had suggestions, and 7% disagreed with the second draft goal (Figure 3).

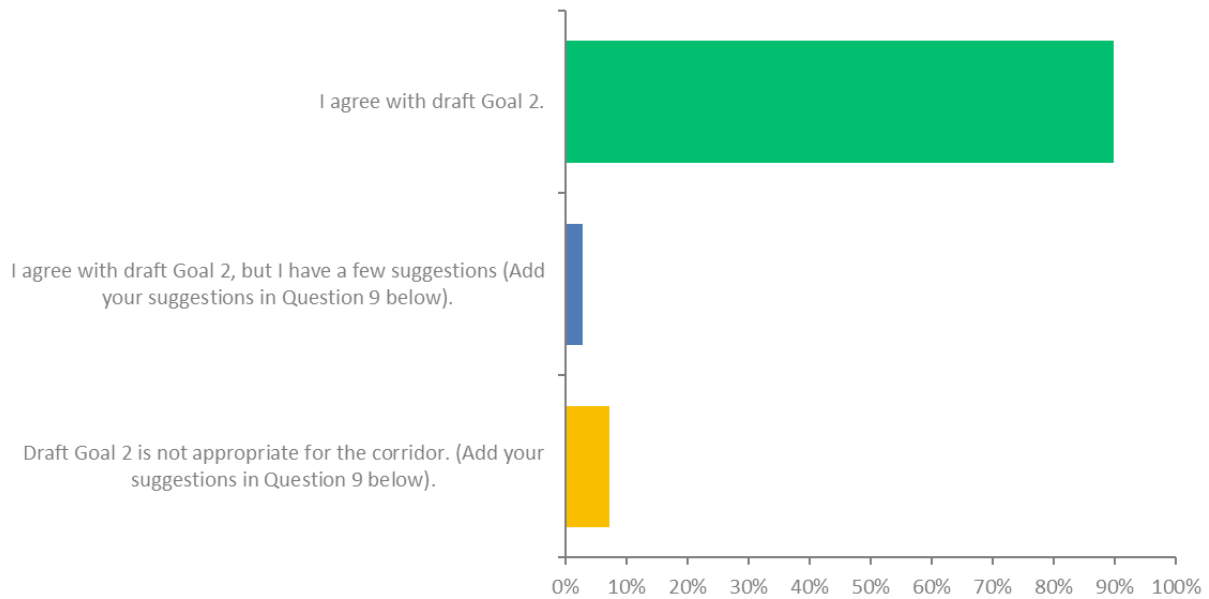


Figure 3 - Percentage of online survey respondents by selection in response to Question 4

For draft goal three, approximately 93% of online survey respondents agreed with the goal, 3% agreed but had suggestions, and 4% disagreed with the third draft goal (Figure 4). This goal received the highest overall support in the online survey.

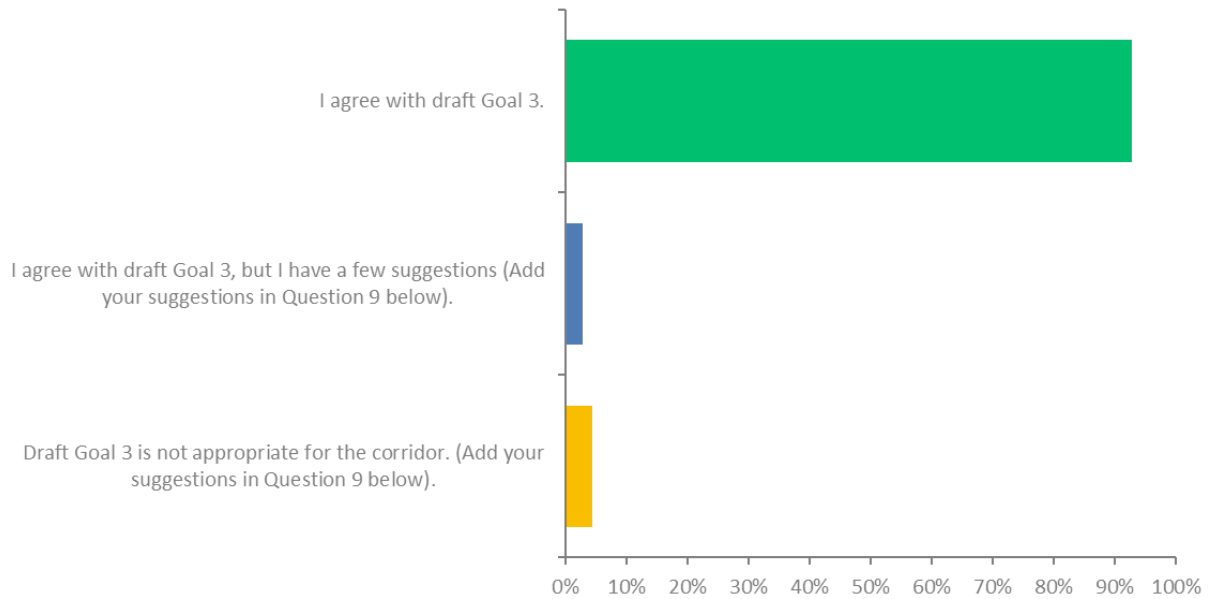


Figure 4 - Percentage of online survey respondents by selection in response to Question 5

For draft goal four, approximately 91% of online survey respondents agreed with the goal, 2% agreed but had suggestions, and 7% disagreed with the fourth draft goal (Figure 5).

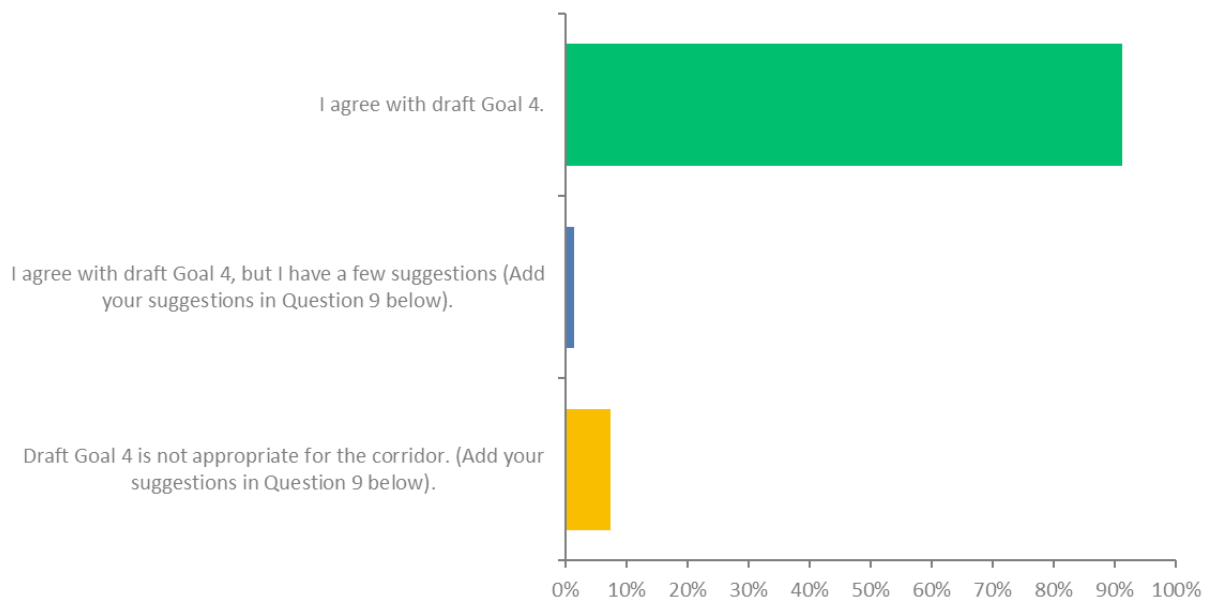


Figure 5 - Percentage of online survey respondents by selection in response to Question 6

For draft goal five, approximately 90% of online survey respondents agreed with the goal, 3% agreed but had suggestions, and 7% disagreed with the fifth draft goal (Figure 6).

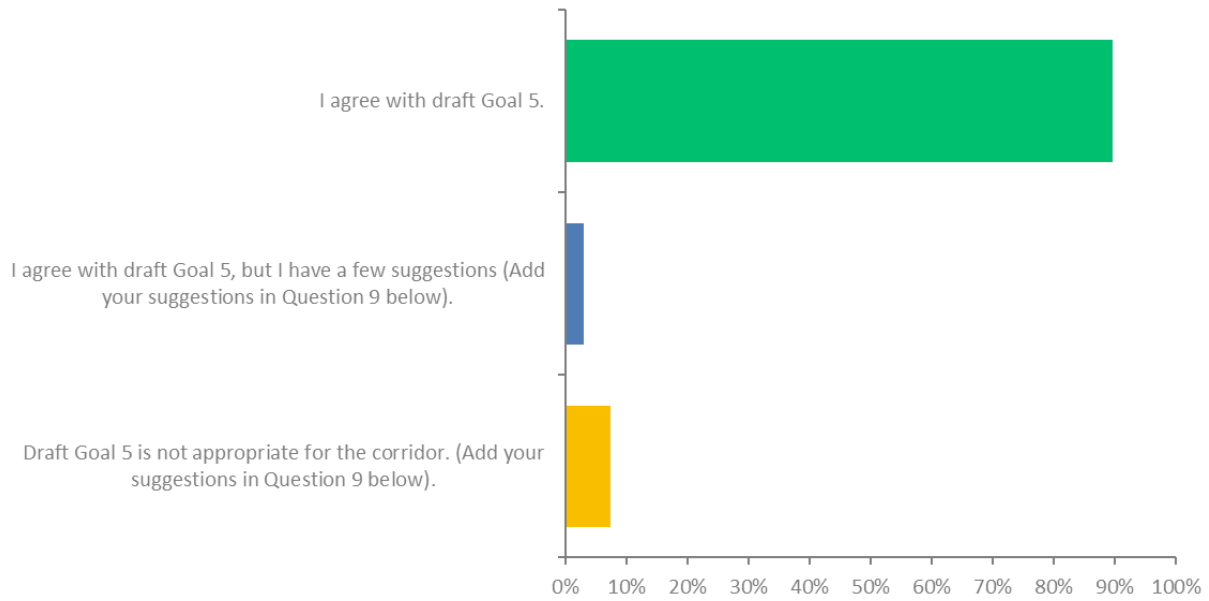


Figure 6 - Percentage of online survey respondents by selection in response to Question 7

For draft goal six, approximately 90% of online survey respondents agreed with the goal, 4% agreed but had suggestions, and 6% disagreed with the second draft goal (Figure 7).

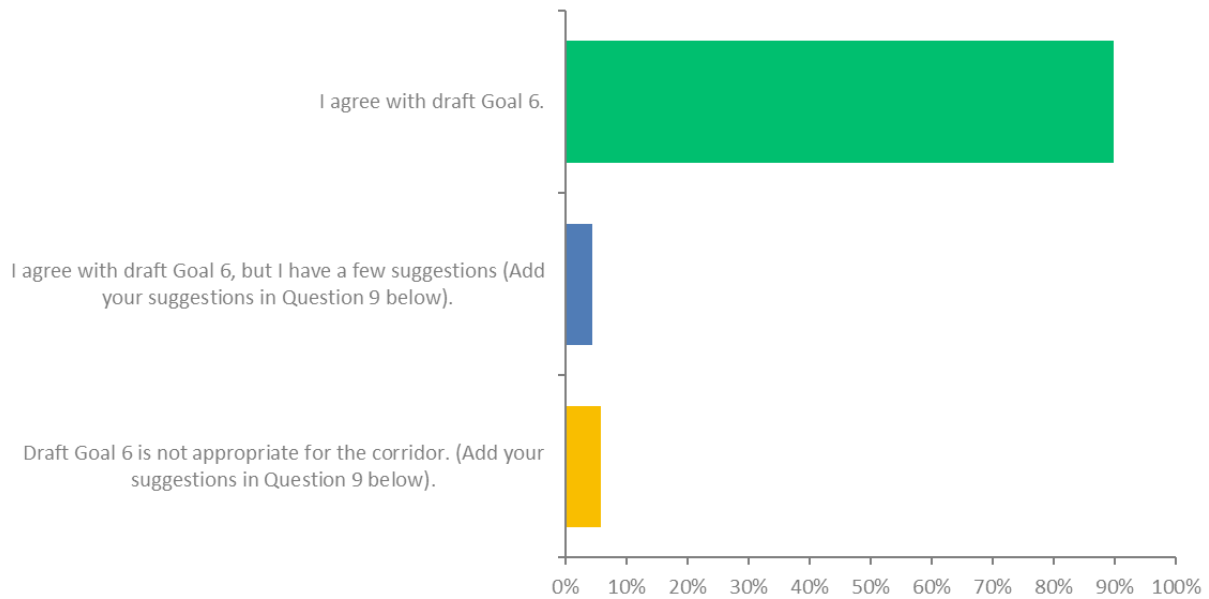


Figure 7 - Percentage of online survey respondents by selection in response to Question 8

Comments in support of the proposed draft goals received in the online survey include:

- Support for quality multi-unit residential development with affordable housing as the highest priority to draw more people to the area and provide a stronger employment base for businesses.
- Filling in sidewalk gaps and adding new sidewalks.
- Repurposing/reusing vacant buildings.
- Support for additional green space.

Community members provided ideas or suggestions on how to improve the draft goals through the online survey, including:

- A preference to not include manufacturing as a supported use in the area.
- To ensure there is consideration for how businesses and manufacturing development impacts residential development in terms of light, noise, and air pollution.
- A preference to not include insurance, “antique” stores, or “smoke shops”.
- To make the plan area like the east side of Urbana.
- To keep rents lower than cities like Columbus, Ohio.
- Addressing traffic safety issues in the area, including truck traffic.
- A recommendation to make the goals more specific.
- A desire to make the city more desirable for youth to encourage students to stay in the City of Urbana as adults.
- Use the City of Bellefontaine as an example of how to develop in the City of Urbana.

Online survey respondents that were not in support of the elements of the draft goals provided the following comments:

- The feeling that people already use the area in these ways.
- A desire for the area to remain the same with no change, especially in the areas around the airport and north of the airport.
- A lack of support to plan for the area.

## Action Steps

The action steps were developed to be implementable steps to help achieve the vision statement and goals of the plan.

Community members were asked if they agreed or disagreed with each of 13 action steps and given the opportunity to provide additional comments or provide ideas for additional goals. Each action step received a higher percentage of votes for “agree” than “disagree” or “undecided,” however, the range of percent of support varied more greatly than with the draft goals (**Table 1**).

The draft goals presented at the community meeting and via the online survey included:

- *Draft Action Step One:* “Consider a new zoning district to allow mixed-use development, reduced minimum building setbacks, increased max floor area ratio, and reduced parking requirements.”
- *Draft Action Step Two:* “Develop strategies to support a variety of food and drink establishments including sit-down restaurants, fast-food restaurants, coffee shops, etc.”
- *Draft Action Step Three:* “Support and encourage new and existing businesses to locate, expand, or invest in the area, including small businesses and local businesses.”
- *Draft Action Step Four:* “Capitalize on economic development opportunities from the traffic and visitors at Grimes Field Municipal Airport.”
- *Draft Action Step Five:* “Add housing at a variety of price points.”
- *Draft Action Step Six:* “Create a county land bank to help stabilize the property tax base, assist in reducing vacancies, and support redevelopment of neighborhoods.”
- *Draft Action Step Seven:* “Provide facilities for pedestrians and people riding bicycles to travel from the Simon-Kenton Trail connection on North Main Street to the Grimes Field Municipal Airport.”
- *Draft Action Step Eight:* “Recommend the City of Urbana apply for funding to add pedestrian facilities, relocate private lighting and signs in the right-of-way, and close unnecessary access points along the corridor.”
- *Draft Action Step Nine:* “Install landscaping and street trees to enhance the appearance of the area.”
- *Draft Action Step Ten:* “Explore using the existing Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) designation to encourage residential and commercial development and new investment within the area. (A CRA is a tax exemption program benefiting property owners who renovate existing or construct new buildings. The City of Urbana previously established a CRA and it includes a majority of this plan area.)”
- *Draft Action Step Eleven:* “Implement the Urbana Corridor Development Standards (corridor overlay) for new development or major redevelopment that occurs in the plan area.”
- *Draft Action Step Twelve:* “Create a sense of community in the area by developing public/private partnerships to support activities like community gardens, community events, and campaigns to support local businesses.”
- *Draft Action Step Thirteen:* “Recommend the City of Urbana consider strategic land acquisition to assist in reuse or redevelopment of vacant property and underutilized parking lots.”

At the in-person event, less people voted on the action steps than the goals, however, each action step still received more votes for “agree” than “disagree” with each one receiving between two to four votes each for “agree” and zero votes for “disagree.” Draft action steps three, and six to eleven received the most “agree” votes at the in-person meeting, each receiving four votes of support.



For the online survey, draft action step three received the highest percentage of support with approximately 88% of respondents stating that they agreed with the action step. Action steps two, four, seven, ten, and thirteen also had 75% or more of respondents select “agree.” Action step five suggested adding housing at a variety of price points and was supported by just over half of those who responded but was also not supported by about 33% of people. Similarly, action step one recommended considering a new zoning district to allow updated zoning standards for mixed use development and was supported by approximately 58% of respondents while about 23% disagreed with the action step (Table 1).

Table 1 - Percentage of online survey respondents by selection in response to Question 10

	AGREE	DISAGREE	UNDECIDED OR UNSURE	TOTAL
1. Consider a new zoning district to allow mixed use development, reduced minimum building setbacks, and reduced parking requirements to support design that is welcoming and more easily accessible.	58.33% 28	22.92% 11	18.75% 9	48
2. Develop strategies to support a variety of food and drink establishments including sit-down restaurants, fast-food restaurants, coffee shops, etc.	86.96% 40	8.70% 4	4.35% 2	46
3. Support and encourage new and existing businesses to locate, expand, or invest in the area, including small businesses and local businesses.	88.10% 37	4.76% 2	7.14% 3	42
4. Capitalize on economic development opportunities from the traffic and visitors at Grimes Field Municipal Airport.	76.74% 33	11.63% 5	11.63% 5	43
5. Add housing at a variety of price points.	51.11% 23	33.33% 15	15.56% 7	45
6. Create a county land bank to help stabilize the property tax base, assist in reducing vacancies, and support redevelopment of neighborhoods	65.00% 26	15.00% 6	20.00% 8	40
7. Install landscaping and street trees to enhance the appearance of the area.	79.07% 34	13.95% 6	6.98% 3	43
8. Explore using the existing Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) designation to encourage residential and commercial development and new investment within the area. (A CRA is a tax exemption program benefiting property owners who renovate existing or construct new buildings. The City of Urbana previously established a CRA and it includes a majority of this plan area.)	80.49% 33	9.76% 4	9.76% 4	41
9. Implement the Urbana Corridor Development Standards (corridor overlay) for new development or major redevelopment that occurs in the plan area	64.29% 27	9.52% 4	26.19% 11	42
10. Create a sense of community in the area by developing public/private partnerships to support activities like community gardens, community events, and campaigns to support local businesses.	78.05% 32	12.20% 5	9.76% 4	41
11. Recommend the City of Urbana consider strategic land acquisition to assist in reuse or redevelopment of vacant property and underutilized parking lots.	64.44% 29	15.56% 7	20.00% 9	45
12. Provide facilities for pedestrians and people riding bicycles to travel from the Simon-Kenton Trail connection on North Main Street to the Grimes Field Municipal Airport.	71.43% 30	11.90% 5	16.67% 7	42
13. Recommend the City of Urbana apply for funding to add pedestrian facilities, relocate private lighting and signs in the right-of-way, and close unnecessary access points along the corridor.	75.00% 39	13.46% 7	11.54% 6	52

Comments in support of the proposed draft action steps received and the in-person event and via the online survey include:

- Support for the reuse of existing structures.
- Support for a land bank.
- Support for sidewalk and path installation.
- Support for additional green space.

Community members provided ideas or suggestions on how to improve the draft goals through the in-person meeting and online survey, including:

- A desire to not see an over abundance of fast-food type restaurants or “big-box” stores.
- Provide connections to Pointe North and repair the lakes.
- Addressing traffic safety issues in the area, including truck traffic, and consider a track bypass to the west of North Main Street.
- Expand light poles and Christmas decorations to this area of Urbana.
- Create incentives for homeowners to improve their properties in addition to business owners.

Online survey respondents that were not in support of the elements of the draft goals provided the following comments:

- A desire for the area to remain the same with no change, especially in the areas around the airport and north of the airport.
- A lack of support to plan for the area.
- A desire for investment to be focused in the downtown area instead of the North Main Street corridor area.