

# 4

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project team developed a public engagement plan (refer to Appendix A) to guide implementation of a comprehensive and transparent engagement process with citizens and key stakeholders in Maryland Heights. The plan describes in detail the targeted audiences, engagement strategies and outreach methods to support the planning effort.

The overall goals of public engagement for the Dorsett Road Great Streets Plan were identified as:

1. Help the community visualize what is possible in the long and short-term to transform Dorsett Road (from Lindbergh Boulevard to Marine Avenue) into a Great Street.
2. Educate the community about the planning elements that will make the vision a reality – including design elements, access management, and designing for multi-modal transit.
3. Build consensus on a master plan for the Dorsett Road corridor.

## Steering Committee and Stakeholder Meetings

In order to engage businesses and investors in the Dorsett Road corridor, the project team worked with representatives from East-West Gateway, the City of Maryland Heights' City Administrator, and the City of Maryland Heights Planning Department to form a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was a leadership group comprised of key stakeholders, such as local business owners, representatives from St. Louis County, the City of Maryland Heights, Maryland Heights Chamber of Commerce, Maryland Heights City Council and East-West Gateway who served as champions for Dorsett Road Great Streets Plan and served to represent interest groups and associated constituents in the planning and design process. At regular meetings throughout the evolution of the plan, this committee helped guide the project and advised the team on the interests of property owners and investors in the corridor, as well as foreseeable problems with project costs and implementation. Steering Committee input was used to help define the project's critical success factors, identify design needs, and address investment possibilities and concerns.

In addition, the Steering Committee served as an agent to introduce project stakeholders to the project team and facilitate relationships among those interested parties in order to gain as much investment, usage and implementation feedback as possible. During the winter and spring of 2013, the project team met regularly with property owners, business owners, area developers, elected officials and city staff in Maryland Heights. The team also reached out to representatives and staff from St. Louis County, the Metropolitan Sewer District, the Missouri Department of Transportation, the Maryland Heights Chamber of Commerce and the general public. The key issues in the planning process included 1) development of design alternatives that meet the needs of current property owners and the community's vision for Dorsett Road as a Great Street and 2) identification of projects that can be implemented in the short-term, including projects that support the revision and update to the Weldon Progress Corridor and other areas along Dorsett Road.

## Tools and Strategies

The project team utilized a variety of tools to ensure participation by a broad cross-section of the community including public meetings, individual meetings and online tools. Property owners and renters in the study area received mailed invitations to participate as well as study updates. A stakeholder list of almost 400 individuals received the same information electronically. The community was interested in this project as indicated by the attendance at public meetings and participation in on-line forums.

Additional methods of outreach included:

- Notes in the City Newsletter, City Planner Report, East-West Gateway Local Government Briefings, and the Maryland Heights Chamber of Commerce newsletter
- Media outreach to the Maryland Heights Patch, Suburban Journal West County, St. Louis Post Dispatch, KMOV, KMOX, KSDK, KTVI and KWMU
- Online social media including the project website, mentions on the City of Maryland Heights website, Twitter and Facebook
- City of Maryland Heights Community Centre Outdoor and Indoor signs
- St. Louis County Variable Message Signs on Dorsett Road
- Metro Bus – Rider Alerts on the #33 Dorsett-Lackland bus
- Poster distribution to local municipal buildings, businesses, and residential areas

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	*
Attendance, Public Meeting #1, March 27	52
Attendance, Public Meeting #2, April 24	130
Attendance, Public Meeting #3, June 12	95
Surveys Completed On-Line	177

*\* Number of participants collected by Shockey Consulting.*

*January-February 2013 - Initial Stakeholder Outreach.*

Stakeholder interviews were conducted to discuss site specific issues and opportunities with property owners and agency personnel. Interviews were conducted with key city staff and elected officials in Maryland Heights, St. Louis County, the business community and developers. These conversations were often technical in nature and designed to “test the waters” for potential improvements and pave the way for implementation.



*Community members attend the first public meeting at the Maryland Heights Community Centre.*

### *March 27, 2013 – Public Meeting #1*

The first public meeting was held at 6:30pm at the Maryland Heights Community Centre. Fifty-two attendees were introduced to the project during a 30 minute presentation. The presentation reviewed the Great Streets Initiative, existing conditions within the Dorsett Road corridor, and the opportunities and constraints for future land use planning and streetscape design. Following the meeting, the community members participated in a keypad polling session to gauge community interests in a variety of possibilities for the corridor. The public also helped to identify key issues and areas for improvement within the corridor. Questions from this polling session were made available online after the meeting to allow residents and other interested parties to weigh in on corridor topics, despite their absence from the public meeting.

Attendees were then invited to play “The Chip Game.” The Chip Game allows community members to contribute to the design process by presenting their desired land use patterns and siting locations where they would like to see changes in the corridor. Results from this game, the keypad polling session, and online survey results were analyzed by the project team to create preferred land use alternatives for the corridor.

### *April 24, 2013 – Public Meeting #2*

The second public meeting, also held at the community center, almost tripled in attendance from the first meeting. The project team presented preferred land use alternatives, more specific ideas for new development along the corridor, and possible access management strategies. The public again provided feedback on these ideas through keypad polling, online surveys and a Question and Answer session.

Following the meeting, attendees were invited to take part in a visual preference survey. Eighty-five images in ten different categories were presented on tables to survey participants. Using red and green dots, community members voted on different styles, materials, and types of aesthetic qualities they would like to see or not see in the Dorsett Road corridor. The project team tabulated the results and included the most preferred styles and materials in their recommendations for this project.

### *June 12, 2013 – Public Meeting #3*

A third public meeting was held at the Maryland Heights Senior Centre. The meeting was well-attended (approximately 90 people in attendance) as the project team presented the preferred land use plan and recommended streetscape improvements. To evaluate public support of these recommendations, the project team conducted a keypad polling session. After the session, meeting attendees enjoyed free ice cream. The project team



*Students from Pattonville High School play a chip game.*

was then available for a Question and Answer session to address community concerns and respond to public feedback.

### Chip Games

In addition to the first public meeting, chip games were played with two other groups in the corridor. On April 18th, project team members met with the Maryland Heights Chamber of Commerce to discuss the best options for the land use in the corridor. Ten participants contributed their thoughts about changing land uses along Dorsett Road. On May 15th, 20 students from Pattonville High School played the chip game during a government class. The project team learned that in its existing condition, Dorsett Road is not a destination for students. Most of the participants were familiar with Dorsett but do not seek it out as a destination. To attract younger groups to the corridor, the students requested more shopping, restaurants and entertainment venues along Dorsett Road.


### Project Website: Dorsett Road Great Streets

To further engage community members and provide the public with the latest studies and analyses taking place in the corridor, the project team developed the Dorsett Road Great Streets project website. From February through June 2013, the site had 1,142 visits. The public was able to access the website through links on the City of Maryland Heights webpage, Facebook and Mindmixer. The project team analyzed visits to determine that 49 people accessed the site directly by entering the address in the web bar, 338 used the link provided on the Maryland Heights webpage, and 105 accessing it by conducting a bing! or google search. The number of visitors accessing the project website via Facebook (58) and MindMixer (61) was less significant in relation to overall traffic.

**Dorsett Road  
GREAT STREETS**

## Welcome


The City of Maryland Heights, along with East-West Gateway Council of Governments, is conducting a community-wide planning effort to develop a vision and plan for the future of Dorsett Road as a Great Street in the community. Dorsett Road runs from Lindbergh Boulevard to Creve Coeur Park and serves as one of the "Main Streets" in Maryland Heights. The project team is working with the community to identify how this important corridor can be improved in terms of economic development, planning for all modes of travel (including vehicular, as well as transit, walking, and biking), public art and aesthetics, parks and open space, and providing for community gathering places and facilities.



## We need you!

Tell us your ideas for Dorsett Road. Public input is critical to the success of this study. There are several ways for you to participate:

### Mindmixer



MindMixer is an on-line community conversation organized by planning ideas or concepts. **Jump right in and comment** on someone's idea or generate one of your own. Come back often to see what is new.

### Online Public Survey

Didn't make it to our public meeting? No problem. You can **answer the same questions** posed to the audience on June 12th.

### Documents

The plan for Dorsett Road will capture the vision of the community for this corridor over the next two to three decades and outline improvements that the city and property owners may make to the corridor over the short term and the long term. The plan will serve as a roadmap for the community to help transform Dorsett into a Great Street that will serve as a central point of pride in the Maryland Heights community for future generations.

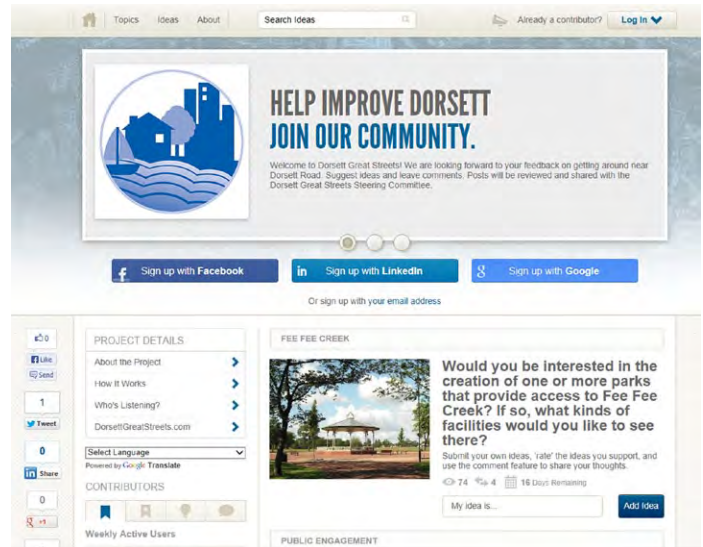
### LINKS

- City of Maryland Heights
- East West Gateway

### MindMixer

MindMixer is an online community engagement tool that allows the public to offer opinions, suggestions, and comments on specific topics related to the project. The project team created a Dorsett Great Streets MindMixer website to garner additional public feedback and ensure that the design process remained transparent and collaborative. After presenting the Dorsett Great Streets MindMixer website to users at the first public meeting, the site was open for public comment. Those not available to attend the meeting were encouraged by local newsletters, post cards, and other media outlets to participate online through the Dorsett Great Streets website. During the design process, the project team posted topics and surveys. Topics included:

- Getting From Here to There
- Building Community
- Parks and Open Space
- Public Art
- Dorsett Road Transit
- Walking and Biking
- Visioning Dorsett Road
- The Feel of Dorsett
- Outreach Process
- Public Engagement
- Public Meetings
- Fee Fee Creek
- Crossing Dorsett
- Retail
- Downtown Maryland Heights



All community comments were collected and disseminated to the project team in order to ensure that community voices were heard and implemented into the plan for the Dorsett Road corridor. The Dorsett Great Streets MindMixer page benefited from 61 active participants, 194 visitors and 2,215 page views. See Appendix B for a full capture of comments.

### Online Surveys

All three surveys conducted during public meetings through keypad polling were made available online to those unable to attend, through an online application called Survey Monkey. The surveys contained the same number of questions and images and allowed at-home participants to provide comments and feedback on a number of questions (an option not available through the keypad polling). Each survey was available online for three weeks after the associated public meeting. Results from both the previous polling session and online surveys were presented to the public during the subsequent meeting.

### Evaluation

This project significantly benefited from a very engaged community whose interest in the project garnered regional attention. High attendance at community meetings, participation in online surveys and MindMixer comments received throughout the design process all helped to guide the project team and deliver a plan that incorporates the highest rated community wants and needs.

During the final public meeting, participants were asked to evaluate the public engagement process that took place during this project. Sixty- five percent of respondents positively favored this process and found the project to be inclusive of their input.