



GREEN DOT = HOME

NEIGHBORHOODS

BLUE

"3 WORDS"

RIGHT NOW	FUTURE
Neighbors look out for each other. Small	SAFE Cleaned up neighbors

PROCESS

Engaging the public is an integral part of the comprehensive planning process. The process of developing a planning vision began on December 5, 2013 at City Hall in Palestine. The IUS team met with 23 members of the community to discuss their likes and dislikes about Palestine and their hopes for the future. For the series of meetings, individuals were invited from many different areas including representatives from local churches, representatives from the Police Department, representatives from the Planning and Zoning Commission, the business community and downtown businesses, neighborhood representatives, and the City Council participated in the stakeholder meetings held in December. (Questions used to guide the sessions and a listing of participants are in Appendix A.)

Public meetings were also held on April 25, 2014 with thirty-one participants in attendance. A visioning exercise consisted of a Visual Preference Survey (VPS) and an interactive map workshop generated conversation targeting four areas: parks and lakes, neighborhoods, businesses, and the downtown core. The visioning process provided the opportunity for participants to provide descriptive words expressing their opinions relating to their city experiences with current conditions and their vision of Palestine in ten years.

The goal for these exercises was to generate impressions of the future of Palestine, its neighborhoods, and its region.

Palestine's vision statement is a story about the kind of place the city will be in the future and what kind of change the citizens are working toward. This vision will be achieved by following a set of clear goals and enacting specific strategies and actions.

VISION STATEMENT:

THE CITY OF PALESTINE COUNCILMEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES VISUALIZE AND WORK TO ADVOCATE A COMMUNITY THAT IS:

- PROGRESSIVE
- NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL
- STRONG BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY-ATTRACTIVE TO NEW BUSINESS
- GOOD JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL
- QUALITY BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY, AND EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
- WELL PLANNED AND MAINTAINED FUNCTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE
- HEALTHY AND SAFE
- AMPLE RECREATION, CULTURAL, AND ARTISTIC OPPORTUNITIES
- A HISTORICAL TREASURE
- A PLACE ALL ARE PROUD TO CALL HOME

FIGURE 22: PALESTINE'S VISION STATEMENT

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

During the visioning process, stakeholders and citizen participants identified key factors that were considered key strengths and weaknesses of Palestine. In addition, citizens identified four key issue areas: neighborhoods and housing, business and employment, downtown Palestine, and parks and open space. Addressing these specifics was the foundation in developing a set of overall goals and recommended actions for the City of Palestine.



FIGURE 23: PALESTINE PERCEIVED STRENGTHS

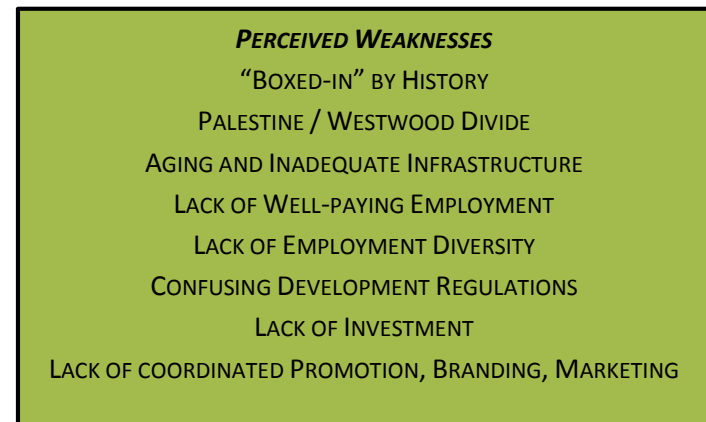


FIGURE 24: PALESTINE PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES

IDENTIFIED ISSUES

For the first exercise, participants were asked to write three words that they felt best described the current Palestine for each of the four key issue areas, then to write three words that would best describe what they would like to say about those same aspects of Palestine 30 years in the future.

For the second exercise, participants were asked to work with a map for each of the four key issue areas of the community and locate places of interest, their place of residence, their place of work, and areas of concern or opportunity. Detailed results of these exercises can be found in Appendix B.

In addition, participants were asked to rate a set of images on a visual preference survey. These images dealt with alternatives for housing, business activity and appearance, the pedestrian streetscape, and appropriateness of different potential land uses for Palestine.

A final source of community input was an online survey administered from June 25 through July 18, 2014. 74 citizens responded to a series of 16 questions about the present day Palestine and their desires for the future of the city. (The complete survey and survey results are in Appendix D)

From this public input, the planning team identified several key issues for Downtown Palestine, Neighborhoods/Housing, Business/Jobs, and Parks and Open Space. These issues were instrumental in crafting the goals and strategies that are presented in this plan.

LAND USE

- DESIRE TO CONCENTRATE DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT IN EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS AND WITHIN CURRENT CITY LIMITS.
- NEED FOR A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES AND ACCESSIBLE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES IN EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS
- NEED TO PRESERVE NATURAL “LOOK AND FEEL” OF PALESTINE
- NEED TO APPROPRIATELY SHARE COSTS AND MINIMIZE ONGOING EXPENSE OF ADDITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE.
- DESIRE TO REPAIR AND IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING STOCK WHILE RESPECTING HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS.

FIGURE 25: LAND USE ISSUES

DOWNTOWN

- NEED TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN'S BUILDINGS AND PEOPLE.
- DIFFICULT FOR RETAIL/RESTAURANT AND OTHER REUSE OF DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS DUE TO DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS AND INFLEXIBLE BUILDING
- EXTENSIVE VACANCIES/UNOCCUPIED AND POORLY MAINTAINED STRUCTURES IN DOWNTOWN
- POORLY IDENTIFIED AND INSUFFICIENT INFRASTRUCTURE
- STRUGGLING FARMERS MARKET.
- LACK OF DISTRICT AND WAY FINDING SIGNAGE FOR DOWNTOWN
- NEED TO INITIATE OPPORTUNITIES TO GENERATE DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL, POSSIBLY IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS.

NEIGHBORHOODS/HOUSING

- LACK OF AFFORDABLE RENTAL OR OWNERSHIP HOUSING
- HIGH NUMBER OF VACANT DWELLINGS, ESPECIALLY IN OLDER NEIGHBORHOODS
- VACANT LOTS RESULTING FROM TEARDOWNS OF POORLY MAINTAINED BUILDINGS
- NEED FOR MORE QUALITY MULTI-FAMILY AND SENIOR HOUSING
- HOUSING NEEDING REPAIR
- NEED FOR BETTER PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

FIGURE 26: DOWNTOWN AND NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES

PARKS/OPEN SPACE

- Desire to increase number of park activities and programming
- Perceived need to develop in-park and off-street trail system for pedestrians and cyclists to provide recreation and connectivity
- Desire to promote the pride the residents have in the city's natural beauty.
- Need to provide park services in a cost effective and equitable manner

BUSINESS

- Allow restaurants and retail to "think outside the box"
- Offer 'high-end' retail choices
- Empower and encourage small family businesses
- Generate efficient traffic flow on the loop
- Encourage signage, lighting, and street beautification
- Encourage development of employment opportunities for younger residents
- Generate more diverse job training, especially skilled trades
- Reduce "red-tape" for developing or redeveloping commercial/retail properties
- Encourage the development of business districts
- Enhance the overall tax base

FIGURE 27: PARKS AND BUSINESS ISSUES

These community derived issues are integral to the land use districts presented in the Future Land Use Map. Specific strategies to achieve these goals, as well as Key Projects are presented in Chapter 7: Implementation.