

Big Ideas Summary Memo

The information included in this document is comprised of opinions of individual respondents to surveys and interviews, and is not necessarily the opinion of any entity named herein.

Results, Round 1 Engagement

February 27, 2025

This document summarizes the results of the first round of public engagement for PLAN Carbondale, a comprehensive plan for the City of Carbondale, Illinois. The first round of engagement was branded as Big Ideas and was designed to capture big ideas from the Carbondale community. The ideas collected and analysis conducted thus far will be used to create specific comprehensive plan recommendations (policies, programs, and projects) for Carbondale.

Input was gathered in the following ways:

1. **Stakeholder interviews.** Meetings were held to interview experts on specific topics related to PLAN Carbondale. The planning team asked participants to provide background information on themselves, things that are or are not working well in the City, and key issues that need to be addressed in the future.
2. **Online engagement.** To promote access, build momentum, and reach a broader audience, the planning team posted a three-part survey on the project website.
 - 2.1. Part one included five broad questions about Carbondale's current state and ideal future.
 - 2.2. Part two allowed participants to map growth and change. Participants could digitally place “protect,” “growth,” and “change” dots on a map of Carbondale and provide comments explaining their choices.
 - 2.3. Part three was an exit questionnaire that asked demographic questions so the planning team could assess if any groups were underrepresented.
3. **In-person engagement.** Over 100 participants attended an in-person workshop at the Civic Center on November 13th. After a brief presentation that provided background information on the planning process, the participants worked in small groups to answer key questions and complete a mapping activity. One Steering Committee member took workshop materials and hosted a separate meeting.

The summary of the engagement findings that follows includes the following components:

- A. Purpose
- B. Outreach and Publicity
- C. Findings
- D. Participation
- E. Next Steps

A. Purpose

The City of Carbondale launched PLAN Carbondale, a process to create a new comprehensive plan for the City. It is expected to be completed by the Spring of 2025. The last plan was completed in 2010. Since the previous plan, Carbondale has experienced change. Now is the time to update the City's comprehensive plan to reflect the changes Carbondale is experiencing and set a positive course of action for the future. One of the key components of the planning process is community insight. Reaching geographic areas and demographic groups typically less likely to engage was a priority.

Overall, the purpose of the first round of engagement was to:

- **Inform** the public about the comprehensive planning process.
- **Educate** the public about the process.
- **Gather initial insight and ideas** that will inform the new plan.
- **Make a good impression** so that people will want to stay engaged.

A second round of engagement will be held in March-April 2025 to test recommendations informed by additional technical analysis and input collected in Round 1.

B. Outreach and Publicity

Extensive outreach and publicity were conducted to spread the word about the opportunities to participate in the first round of engagement. The planning team capitalized on Carbondale's existing networks through civic groups, organizations, religious and faith-based communities, local businesses, local clubs, nonprofits, etc. The PLAN Carbondale Steering Committee played a key role in spreading the word across the community to communicate the importance of this opportunity.

Outreach and publicity included the following:

- Distribution of printed rack cards, flyers, etc.
- Visiting local businesses and organizations to share engagement opportunities.
- Interviews with local media entities.
- City's social media platforms.
- MailChimp (email blasts).
- Direct Emails to stakeholders and organizations.
- Targeted outreach by Steering Committee members.

C. Findings

This section summarizes the input collected from the stakeholder interviews, online engagement, and Big Ideas Workshop.

Stakeholder Interviews

The stakeholder interviews included discussions of big-picture questions that should be addressed in the comprehensive plan. A wide range of stakeholders were interviewed such as City Staff, Green Earth, JAX, SIU, SIH, etc. Below is a summary of ideas from each meeting.

Housing and Development

- Carbondale used to be a bigger City before the student population declined and now has a lot of off-campus housing that was for students and is now vacant or rented as subsidized housing.
- Overall, the housing stock needs upgrades in terms of quality.
- Carbondale approved \$98K for a strategic marketing plan that has 3 main focus areas:
 - 1) inform/engage local and regional residents
 - 2) attract residents (housing)
 - 3) promote tourism
- The City has expanded TIF districts into 3 neighborhoods that need some refreshment.
- Carbondale is hoping to use TIF incentives (TIF 2) to fill vacant buildings, keep up with negligent property owners who are not keeping up w/ ADA, etc. With TIF, if anyone wants to lease or build, they need to upgrade. Have code compliance program to front developers up to \$50K for improvements. The TIFs work by requiring money to be invested and signing an agreement. You are reimbursed via property taxes (the same as the commercial TIF model).
- Housing is difficult to find within a certain price range. (noting \$100K-\$150K)
- There is not much federal funding for housing.
- The housing authority is run by the County.
- The City has 6 inspectors who inspect buildings and properties. They worry about people who are not invested in the community because they can't currently keep up with the property maintenance issues.
- ICC pushes national standards
 - Home rule communities are being pushed to enforce the code.
 - IL does not have statewide building codes; however, recent laws seem to be moving towards creating statewide standards.
- Carbondale needs more curb appeal.
- City doesn't want new housing that sticks out. It is important to have transitions and/or buffers.
 - Moderate density could work if done correctly.
 - If housing is too high-end, nobody can afford to live there.
 - Currently, there are restrictive rules for AirBnB/VRBO.
- Recently old landlords are giving up and getting out of the business. Newcomers are putting the slum lords out of business.

Parks and Recreation

- In Illinois, park districts are separate from cities, which are tied to funding structures. Other entities are often prioritized during funding decisions, which leads to parks suffering financially. The two-entity system is inefficient long-term; merging operations may return to the table. There is potential for City to pay a stipend to consolidate management.
- In Carbondale, parks are in poor condition and have been for years due to a lack of finances and management concerns.
- In the late 1950s/60s, park districts leased city property for low costs, but costs and expectations are now much higher.
- The parks district has developed a park plan, which will be presented in January.
 - The new plan outlines costs and alignment strategies for improvements.
 - Addressing aging facilities and necessary upgrades for both the park district and the City.
- Positive outlook on the new parks plan and hopes for more community involvement.
- New, young talent is doing promising work for the City.
- Parrish Park:
 - The old YMCA (Life Center) purchased in the 1980s is now closed due to high repair costs (crumbling pool, building issues). Staff relocated to Lakeland Center for programming (e.g., karate, Zumba). Plans to demolish the Live Center and reimagine the space, potentially with features like a dog park or enhanced fields.
- Walking Trails:
 - There has been a push to expand walking trails and secure grants. Trails are seen as critical even if funding plans fall through.
- Attucks Park:
 - Improvements needed for pavilions, roofs, and ball diamond updates. Secured grant for a new playground with solid surfacing. The spray pad is well-used, but overall, the park requires revitalization.
- Doug Lee Superblock:
 - Mixed use for ballfields and outdoor swimming pool (City and park district managed). City invested in grants for upgrades but still needs new concession stands and minor updates. Limited event capacity—primarily a local draw. Competition from Marion, which has a more developed tourism infrastructure.
- Parks should prioritize neighborhood and community use over tourism.
- Opportunity to fill gaps in fostering community connections through accessible programming.
- Green Earth manages seven nature preserves in and adjacent to Carbondale.
- Public access to nature is extremely important to this community. There is work being done to make nature even more accessible (ADA compliance, children's trails, guide points, informational kiosks).
- Land stewardship is essential. There is work being done to remove invasive species and plan native species.

- A large challenge is habitat management. There is a lot of hands-on, physical work to be done because people plant invasive species.

Economic Development

- About eight years ago, downtown became hollowed out while simultaneously, the mall was dying. SIU lost 50% of enrollment. It was easier to make money in the town before enrollment declined. At the time, Carbondale did not adapt to changing conditions. Currently, barriers remain to opening businesses.
- There are few landlords that hold most of the property along the strip in downtown. There is a desire to open businesses along the strip, but they are asking high prices for rent.
- Southern Illinois University and Southern Illinois Healthcare are the largest employers in the region. Both are nonprofits, so they don't pay property taxes. There is a need to diversify employment.
- There is a perception that Carbondale's taxes hurt businesses, impacting economic vitality. Run-down images and loitering create a negative impression, even if partially based on perception.
- Unique experiences have disappeared, leaving parts of the city feeling like a "ghost town." Post-COVID social settings require new strategies to attract and engage people. Nightlife and Late-Night entertainment options are also a problem. There is only one late-night venue, which is often associated with trouble, and there are few places for staff to socialize.
- There has been a decline in Carbondale's reputation as a regional hub for shopping and fun; Marion is now preferred by many. However, there is positive momentum downtown.
 - A lot of vacant downtown buildings are being filled up.
 - The city has started hosting concerts and bringing events in.
 - Beautification efforts such as sidewalk reconfiguration have started to pay off.
- Carbondale has confusing building design standards, sign requirements, etc., but there has been progress in loosening up some ordinances.
- There have been challenges with attracting new, larger employers because the industrial land is privately owned.
- Work has been done on the creation of an industrial park near the airport and a school of automotive technology on the north side of town. The City would like to develop an automotive program to attract automotive industry employers to the region.
- There is a low average household income, partly because Carbondale is a university town.
- The mall is a priority for City Council to fill/revive. It is owned out of NY. The owners are not interested in filling the mall because it is a tax write-off for them. However, they are interested in selling or finding a silent partner for something that isn't only retail.

- They have worked with the planning department to create an overlay district to expand allowable uses.
- Malls across the country are dying. To reimagine, there needs to be significant investment.
- The mall is in an enterprise zone and opportunity zone (not a TIF district).
- Part of the property has been sold to SIH. Part sold to SIU credit union. There are two retail outlets w/ external entrances that are doing well. The theater is still operating. Otherwise, the mall is vacant. (350-400K sf)
- There is a desire for walkability and mixed-use districts. Street diets and improving downtown's visual appearance (such as burying power lines) will help promote these initiatives.
- SIU is the only higher education institution in the region which makes Carbondale a cultural hub. SIU's alumni base has an affinity for Carbondale, not just SIU. There are lots of opportunities to continue tapping into older alumni which are valuable.
- Carbondale has to work to fix the safety issues and the perception of crime.

Community Identity

- Carbondale has been, for decades, a university town.
 - This is great in many ways—younger and highly educated, more diverse, making Carbondale unique in the region. It helps w/ the creativity aspect/strong creative culture, a reason to focus on the entertainment/music scene.
- Tourism agencies should use Carbondale as a base camp.
 - The City has started this work by hiring a tourism/special events coordinator reporting to the Economic Development department. They have created events in town. (Halloween—brought back in 2018 as a family-friendly event, off the rails concert series, along old railroad).
 - The City and County tourism bureau have begun working together more frequently, creating a positive synergy.
- Carbondale has recently been made more ADA friendly.
- Some old catchphrases include, “Play here. Stay here. Belong here.” and “A place to be yourself. A place to just be.”

Southern Illinois University

- Students have a one-year on-campus requirement. After that, they have the choice; many hope they can stay on campus.
- In Carbondale, there is a prevalence of slum landlords who treat students poorly, leading to bad reviews, which is driving students away. Trust issues persist, and there is a waitlist for on-campus housing.
- Violence off-campus impacting the safety of students on-campus. High volume of police requests for safe walks back to housing, highlighting a lack of security.

- International students, who often live off-campus, face bait-and-switch tactics and limited winter break housing options. There are insufficient services for international families, despite their desire to stay in the area and raise families in the Unity Point School District. There are restrictions that prevent non-students from staying in student housing, further limiting options.
- A nationwide enrollment cliff is anticipated, making a 15K student population unlikely. A more realistic goal, especially for in-person enrollment, is 12K students.
- Carbondale and SIU should work towards incentivizing more family-friendly housing and services to encourage international families to settle locally.
- Summer events are successful, with opportunities to replicate similar events during the school year.
- Students without cars need walkable areas and better connections, especially to the train station.
- Strong political polarization influences decisions and creates tension, complicating city efforts to improve.
- Hard to attract staff due to negative perceptions of the city and limited amenities. There is no Employee-Sponsored Housing Assistance because safety concerns and high taxes discourage living in Carbondale. Most non-local hires choose Marion or other nearby areas for housing. On-campus faculty housing is in demand but not provided, signaling a systemic issue. Off-campus housing for lower-income staff is critically needed.
- Formerly popular student housing areas (Cherry, Elm, Walnut) are now avoided by students. Students face bug infestations and poor maintenance in off-campus housing.
- The SIU Master Plan has included discussions of replacing the old "three towers" student housing (closed in 2018), which are ongoing, but funding is lacking. New apartments could be a long-term goal (3-5+ years). Sentimental and historical ties to the towers could influence design decisions. Alumni donors and potential private-public partnerships (P3s) could support new housing projects.
- Southern Hills Housing includes 70-year-old buildings that are still partially used but largely outdated. There is some sentiment for preserving history, but maintenance issues are significant.
- Carbondale's reclassification as rural limits bus service. Without Greyhound, there is no direct, accessible transport to the airport, which is an issue for residents and students.
- Declining enrollment contributes to an economic downturn in Carbondale, especially as the city relied on student spending.

Transportation

- JAX is one of three providers in the region and is the primary provider in Carbondale. Their service area matches the VEO scooters. They also provide ADA paratransit, which is a door-to-door service users must qualify for.
- JAX have recently lost a lot of funding, which led to an overhaul. Every route is new in August to use limited funds more efficiently.

- Changes are going well. They are running more efficiently.
 - There are still a lot of holes. There is no east-west connection.
 - They do not have funds to provide those services, but there is a need.
- There is a large need for an east and west connection. SIU cut that route recently.
- The northeast neighborhood is underserved, and there is a big need in this community.
- Recently won a federal comprehensive planning and research grant. This project is focused on:
 - Marketing opportunities
 - Funding opportunities
 - Leadership capability
 - New transit station will also be a focus
- There is a 1st mile/last mile issue.
 - There are bike racks on some buses. They want to get racks on all of the buses.
- Ridership has not declined after COVID-19. JAX is one of the only transit organizations that has not seen ridership decline post COVID. They came out of COVID whole and then exceeded their numbers.
 - 120,000 rides last year
 - Now 125,000 this year
 - Gained Saluki Express
- Without SIU, there would be one route in Carbondale because SUI provides state funds and a fixed route. When the students are gone the routes are gone (summer, winter breaks). They want to be able to operate year-round because members of the community rely on their services.
- Need for an airport connection.

In-Person Workshop

The in person workshop was held on November 13th, 2024, with over 100 respondents. A brief presentation was given that provided background information on the planning process. Afterwards, the participants worked in small groups to answer key questions and complete a mapping activity. The following are key themes that emerged from the workshop.

Inclusivity/Accessibility/Culture

- Strong desire for expanding family-friendly environments, especially spaces for kids and teens where parents can relax and enjoy time with their children.
- Focus on creating accessible public areas with improved ADA infrastructure to ensure disabled individuals can fully enjoy these spaces.
- Interest in enhancing public parks and community-oriented spaces with low-cost or free activities, particularly for colder months.
- Providing free parking options is noted as a way to further increase the accessibility and convenience of inclusive community hubs.

Housing

- Respondents emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach to improving housing quality, accessibility, and affordability.
- Enhancing housing standards by enforcing stricter regulations on landlords.
- Rehabilitating rundown properties to ensure safe, livable conditions.
- Expanding affordable and inclusive housing options is a priority, including:
- Subsidized units and tiny home options should be explored.
- Mixed-use developments serving low-income families, retirees, and individuals with disabilities are needed.
- High interest in more rental options for families, coupled with concerns about absentee landlords/slumlords neglecting properties.
- Suggestions for promoting sustainable and community-oriented development:
 - Utilizing local materials and renewable energy.
 - Incentivizing housing cooperatives focused on affordability.
- Desire for more mid-level and family-friendly housing to attract professionals and families.
- Addressing high property taxes as a barrier to homeownership.
- Revitalizing public spaces and neighborhoods through:
 - Incentive programs to enhance property maintenance and community pride.
 - Exploring innovative uses for vacant buildings to house the unhoused.
- Supporting homeownership and neighborhood stability by:
 - Increasing opportunities for first-time buyers.
 - Encouraging owner-occupied rentals.
 - Leveraging creative zoning to foster vibrant, mixed-use communities.

Improvements to the Built Environment

- Emphasis on enhancing urban design and public space improvements to create a vibrant and welcoming environment in Carbondale.
- Strong interest in creating a vibrant, walkable community with more public spaces for all ages.
- Desire for greater architectural consistency and aesthetics through:
 - Style guidelines to preserve the town's character.
 - Expanding mini-grant programs for curb appeal and facade enhancements.
- Focus on beautifying the city through:
 - Improved appearance of public spaces and buildings.
 - Implementation of public art.
- Expanding greenspaces and landscaping in business districts with native plants and centralized green areas to integrate nature into the urban landscape.
- Improving pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, including:
 - Better sidewalks, outdoor seating, and pedestrian-only zones.

- Addressing lighting and safety concerns to create a safer nightlife experience.
- Enhancing wayfinding and public amenities by providing better signage, public restrooms, and more trash cans.
- Interest in revitalizing or rehabilitating abandoned buildings to make them usable and more attractive.
- Advocating for eliminating paid parking and improving streetscape design to balance building scale with street width to attract more foot traffic and create an appealing urban environment.

Transportation

- Strong desire for improved transportation infrastructure and mobility options in Carbondale.
- Emphasis on enhanced walkability, bike-friendliness, and public transit services.
- Significant demand for better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, including:
 - More sidewalks and high-visibility crosswalks.
 - Protected bike lanes along major routes.
 - Wider bike paths and multimodal trails connecting neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- Calls for public transit enhancements, such as:
 - More reliable and extensive bus services with additional routes and 24-hour operations.
 - Exploring new transit methods like trolleys or light rail systems to improve connectivity.
 - Improved connections to larger cities, such as St. Louis.
- Interest in expanding alternative transportation options, including:
 - Rideshare services.
 - Bike and scooter rentals.
 - Community taxis or green electric vehicles.
- Gateway improvements to create a more welcoming entrance to the city.
- Support for traffic calming measures, such as:
 - Roundabouts and reduced speed limits to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Focus on ensuring accessibility and inclusive mobility for:
 - Seniors, people with disabilities, and those needing medical or essential services transportation.
- Enhancing connectivity and wayfinding through:
 - Clearer signage, eliminating one-way streets, better lighting, and linked bike trails and greenways.
- Simplifying parking and downtown development by:
 - Adding covered, monitored parking options.

- Encouraging infill projects to boost walkability and reduce reliance on car-centric infrastructure.

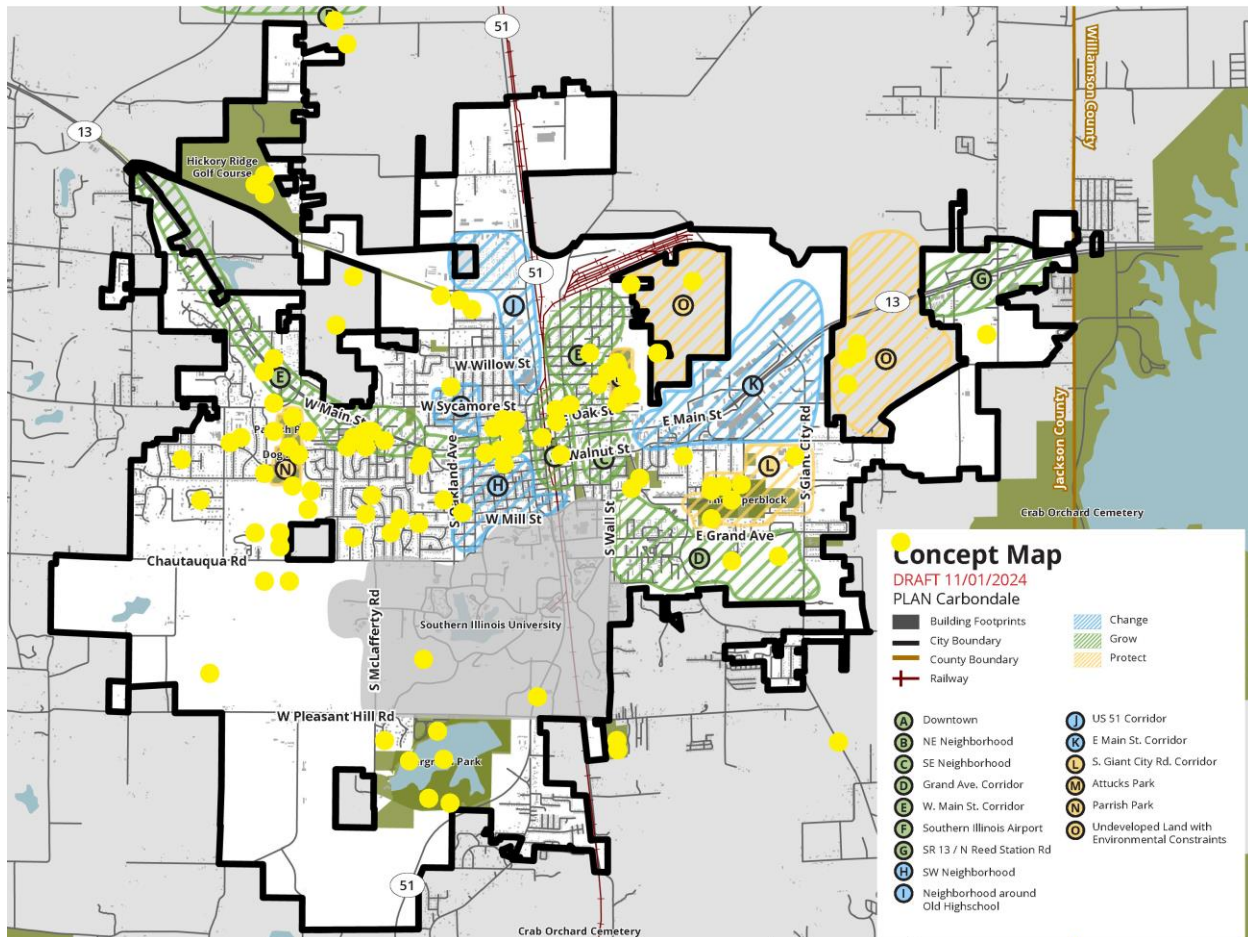
Economy/Services

- Need to improve economic conditions to attract and retain residents and businesses.
- Focus on making Carbondale an appealing destination, especially for remote workers.
- Revitalizing downtown and surrounding spaces, such as the mall and parking lots, is a key priority.
- Call for a more vibrant business scene in the downtown area.
- Addressing vacant spaces with creative uses, including housing and community-oriented spaces.
- Desire to expand green initiatives and sustainability efforts.
- Interest in increasing overall programming and events to enhance community engagement.

The Big Ideas Workshop mapping activity was designed to gain further insight into specific places where the community would like to see key topics addressed. Participants will be asked to identify locations they would like to protect, places they would like to see grow, and places they would like to see change in response to the questions and describe their thoughts on these topics.

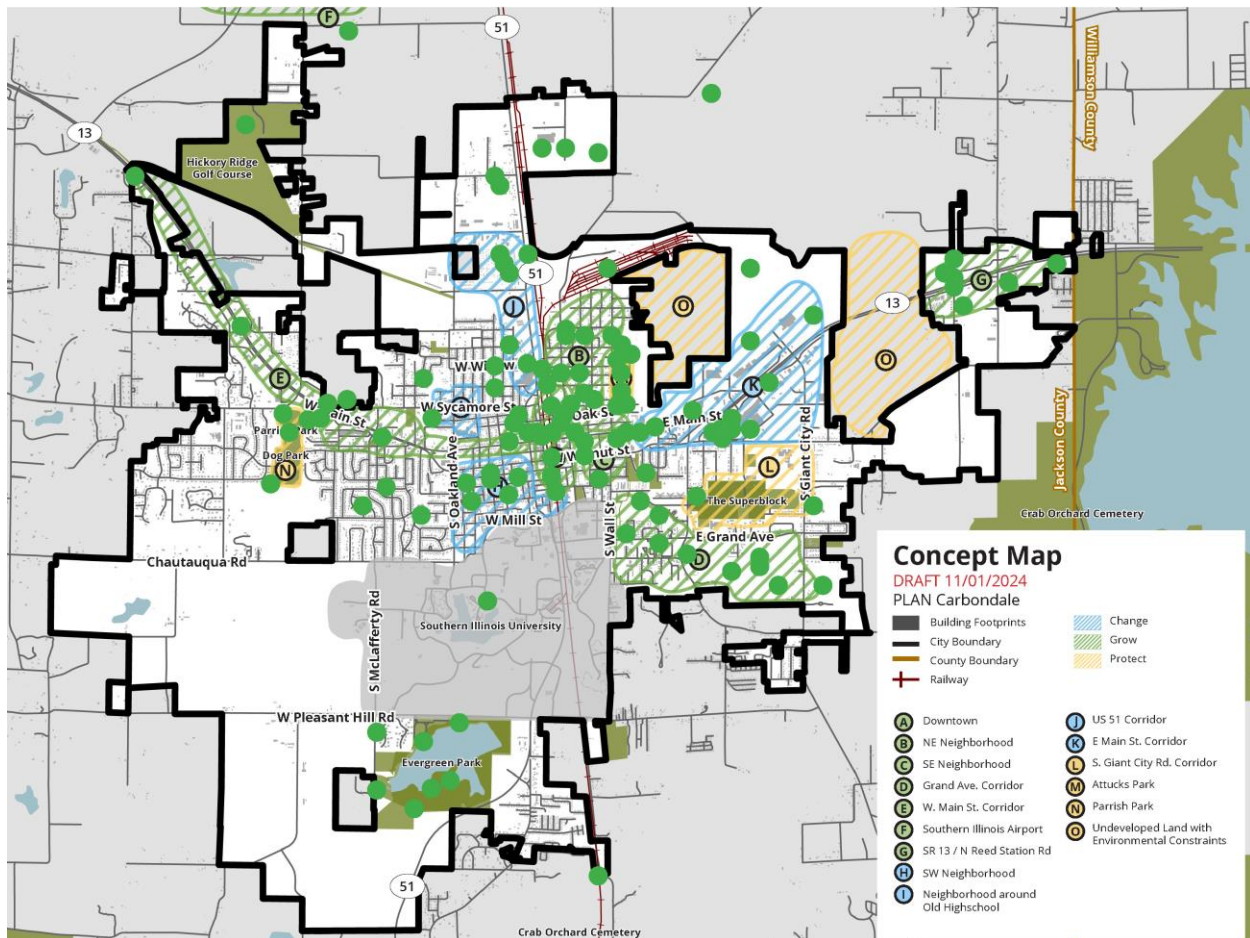
Attendees were asked to reflect on their own map and then place sticker dots on their small groups' shared map, identifying areas they wanted to see Carbondale protect (don't change what's there), grow (enhance and strengthen what's there), or change (replace with something new and different). Afterward, the groups identified clusters of dots, named that area, and then identified why they placed their dots in that geographic location. Following is a summary of the responses:

The yellow dots indicate places people want to protect.



- Existing green space, parks, bike lanes, sidewalks.
- The high school track field.
- Any entertainment for young people should be protected.
- Avoid urban sprawl. Concentrate development downtown.
- Arbor District and the Arbor District industry.
- Historic houses along the east corridor.
- The downtown corridor should be protected for historic value.
- Town Square and the old train depot.
- All parks and green earth properties.
- Anything on the register of historic places should be preserved.

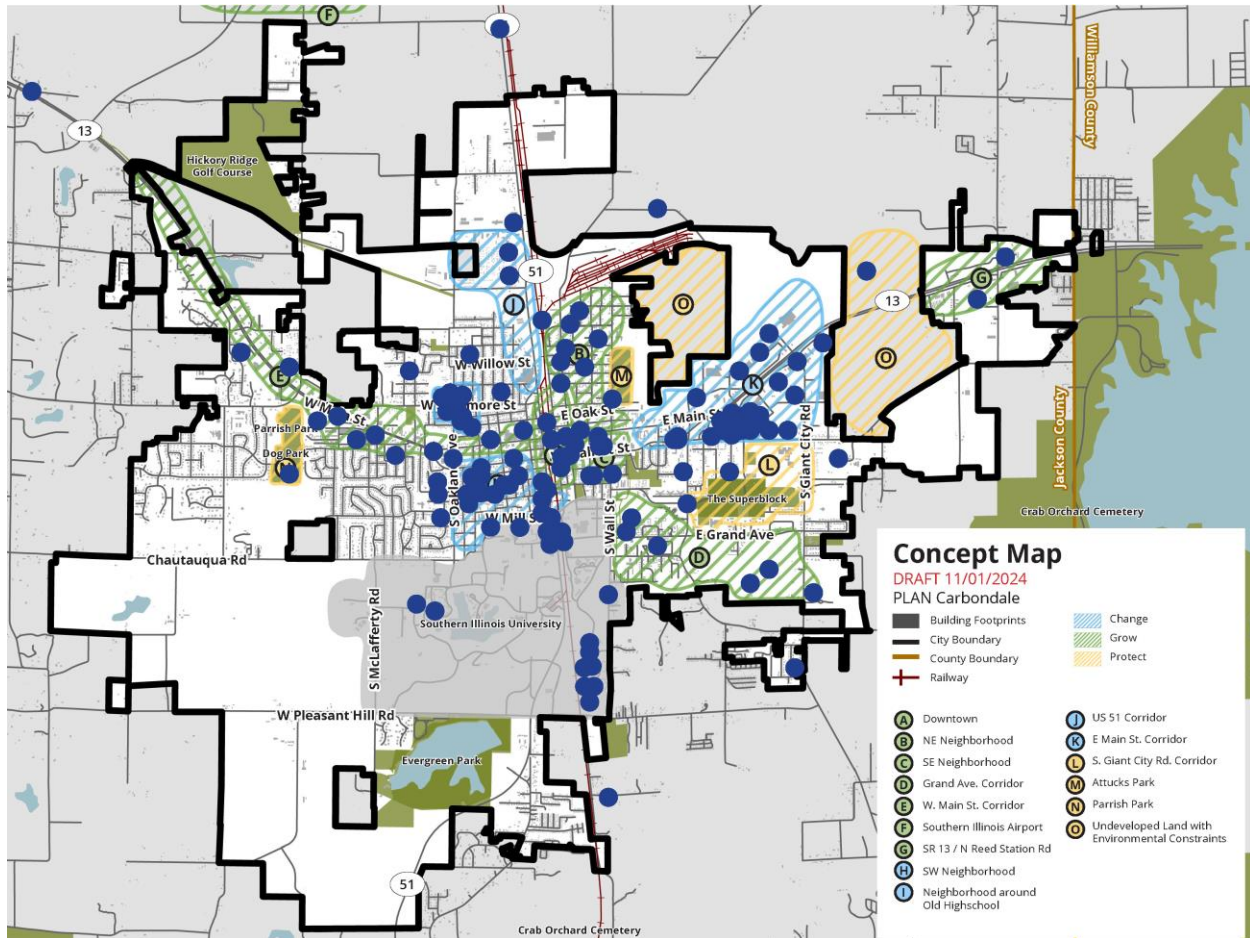
The green dots indicate places people want to grow.



- Old high school track field and basketball hoops.
- Create public trail for running/riding that is padded.
- Expand daycare options.
- More options for neighborhood scale groceries or convenience stores located throughout the City.
- Incentivize later hours of operation for businesses.
- More community gardens.
- Add shaded areas for pedestrians such as awnings to protect from weather along main walkways.
- More things for families and middle school kids to do.
- Keep businesses local and prioritize local culture and economy.
- Invest in Attucks Park.
- Expand gateways into Downtown.
- Connect Grant City/13 with Reed Station Rd.
- Attract industrial parks and jobs for community members.

- Improve student housing.
- Connect NE neighborhood with the rest of Carbondale.
- Consider how mixed-use ideas would work with the existing mall structure.
- Add protected bike infrastructure on the Strip and 13.
- Collaborate with SIU and SIH.

The blue dots indicate places people want to change.



- Invest in the Eurma Hayes Center.
- Encourage home ownership; encourage homeowners and landlords to improve their properties.
- Revamp Mudale parking lot to reduce collisions.
- Add trees and greenery along major thoroughfares.
- Improve housing conditions, especially in areas where students live.
- Ensure buildings around the train depot are not vacant.
- Oakland should have traffic calming measures.
- Downtown should become more walkable with multiuse buildings.
- Roundabouts should be considered at trouble intersections.
- The mall could become a community hub.

Online Engagement

The online engagement was conducted on the PLAN Carbondale website. The Round 1 survey was conducted to give community members time to think about the questions and answer on their own time. The survey had several content questions and an exit questionnaire to identify which demographics were being engaged. The following is a summary of the key ideas shared through the survey.

Q1: What do you like best about Carbondale?

- Respondents like that Carbondale has a college town atmosphere with strong collaboration between SIUC and Carbondale. This offers educational opportunities and a vibrant City.
- Carbondale has a small-town feel with big-city amenities such as a walkable downtown, and convenient access to major cities.
- Carbondale is full of welcoming and civic-minded residents who create a strong sense of community.
- Carbondale is home to a rich arts, music, and cultural scene, as well as home to diverse local restaurants, events, and local businesses.
- Respondents appreciate access to natural amenities such as lakes, woods, wineries, and numerous outdoor activities.
- Carbondale is a peaceful, safe, and affordable place to live, with a unique local character.

Q2: How can we make places in Carbondale more attractive, comfortable, or inviting?

- Respondents note that potholes, sidewalk maintenance, street lighting, and signage could be improved.
- Established bike routes are a priority for respondents.
- Improving the quality of rental housing as well as addressing homelessness would make Carbondale more inviting.
- Respondents note petty crime and abandon buildings as uncomfortable factors of the City. Perception of safety is important for respondents.

- Respondents note that attracting and retaining businesses as well as storefront investment would make Carbondale more attractive.
- Pedestrian focused commercial areas would be attractive for residents.
- Eliminating paid parking in Downtown would make it more accessible for certain populations.
- Key commercial corridors should be revitalized.
- Address abandoned buildings, blighted properties, and vacant lots.
- Encourage investment in storefront improvements with grants or incentives.
- Create more family-friendly activities, entertainment, and youth programs.
- Expand outdoor dining, food truck events, and cultural programming.
- Increase parks, green spaces, and trails.
- Develop a stronger arts and music scene with regular events.
- Improve the local school system's reputation and resources.

Q3: What kinds of housing do you think Carbondale needs for the future?

- Affordable Housing
 - Homes affordable for young families and first time buyers.
 - Homes that help renters transition into home ownership.
 - Carbondale should prevent predatory land lord practices.
- Diverse Housing
 - Carbondale should be home to a wide range of housing types.
 - Missing Middle housing, including townhomes and duplexes are lacking in Carbondale.
 - Respondents support mixed-use walkable neighborhoods in close proximity to amenities.
 - It is suggested to convert existing vacant second floor office spaces into apartments.
 - Encourage family friendly housing options for recent SIU graduates that want to remain in Carbondale.
- Quality, Maintained Housing
 - Mid level housing for professionals is in high demand within Carbondale.
 - The City should focus on rehabbing and restoring existing homes, specifically those that are vacant.
 - Carbondale should prioritize landlord oversight to improve housing quality.
 - New development should prioritize infill that matches the neighborhood character.
- Specialized Housing
 - Ensure unhoused populations have access to transitional housing with integrated social services.
 - Prioritize the improvement of existing student housing near SIU.
- Respondents note that 3rd party rental (Air BnB, VRBO) regulations should be readdressed to encourage investment and tourism.

Q4: How could it be easier to move around Carbondale and get where you want to go?

- Improve public transportation by adding more bus routes, stops, and reliable services, including late-night options for students and workers.

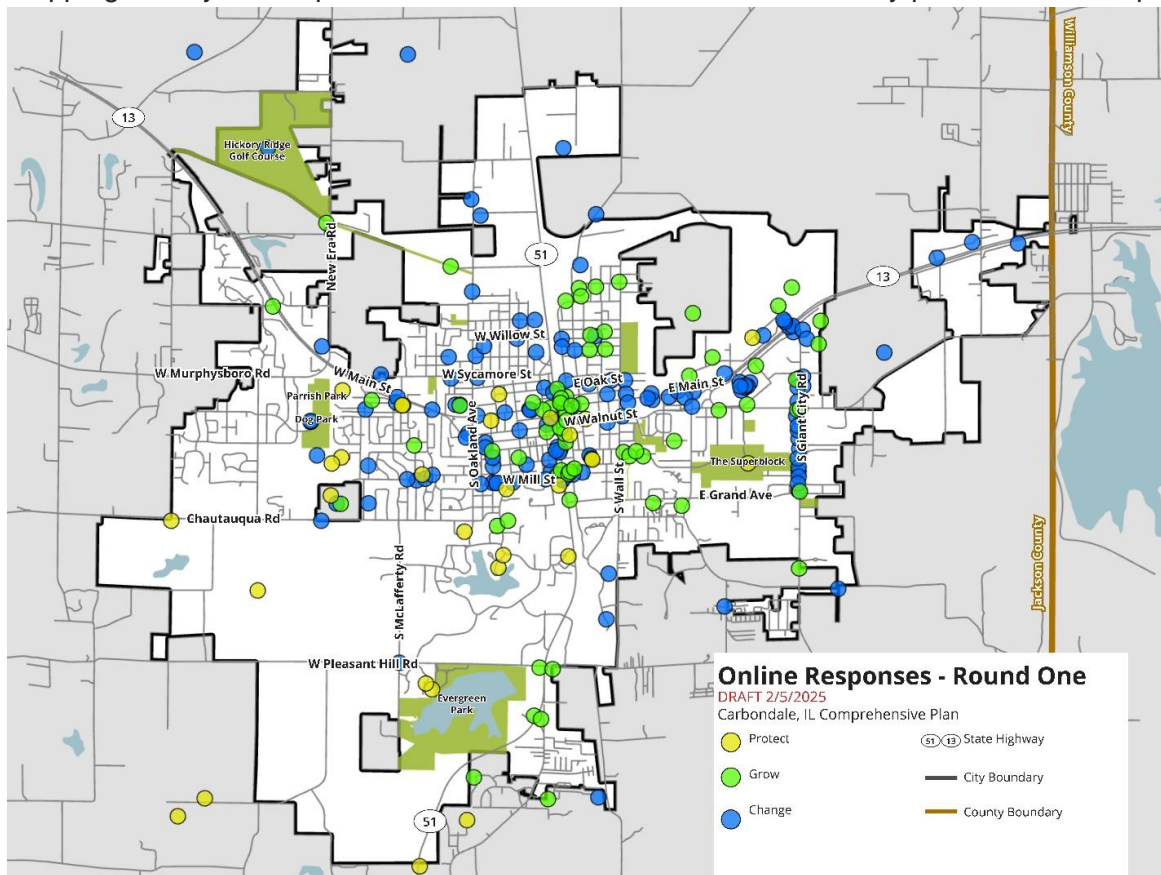
- Implement a network of bike lanes, protected lanes, and pedestrian paths to improve safety and connectivity, especially near major employers and universities.
- Expand rideshare services (Uber, Lyft, taxis), including options for people with disabilities and for medical transport.
- Add more roundabouts, traffic calming measures, and work on road repair especially in high-traffic areas and problem intersections.
- Develop a more walkable downtown by implementing improved sidewalks, more bike racks, and limiting one-way streets to increase accessibility and safety.
- Improve the Veo scooter system by adding more "garages" and ensuring compliance with proper usage and parking.
- Create a central bike path to better connect neighborhoods and greenways.
- Address safety concerns with enforcement of traffic laws and improved signage.
- Promote compact, centralized development with reduced urban sprawl.
- Increase accessibility for people with disabilities, including better sidewalk conditions throughout Carbondale.

Q5: Is there anything else you would like to share?

- Carbondale is a welcoming city, but there are concerns with lack of transportation for people with disabilities, particularly at night and weekends.
- Better lighting, especially on side streets, is needed.
- The closing of businesses and restaurants has been discouraging, and there's frustration about the lack of investment in maintaining certain establishments.
- There are concerns about the homeless population, and resources are needed to support these individuals.
- Crime and safety issues need urgent attention to avoid long-term harm to the city and SIU.
- Carbondale's current layout contributes to sprawl. More focus is needed on reducing highways and increasing walkability.
- The city should incentivize small businesses and revitalize certain residential neighborhoods.
- Better communication and collaboration are needed between the city, SIU, and residents to tackle challenges and improve quality of life.
- More focus on economic development, job creation, and attracting businesses should be prioritized as they are essential to Carbondale's long-term success.
- There are concerns about the lack of nightlife and recreational options.
- Carbondale's green spaces and maintenance should be better managed.
- The mall and other key commercial areas need revitalization.

- It's crucial for the city to preserve its uniqueness, remain progressive, and foster unity within the community, focusing on collaboration and inclusivity rather than division.

Online Map. The online engagement also included a mapping activity identical to the in-person mapping activity. Participants could write comments on each dot they placed on the map.



Below is a summary of the responses for the locations identified to be protected:

- Respondents want to prioritize infill development over expansion to protect undeveloped areas and maintain community character.
- Growth must be managed to preserve parts of the community that have a rural identity.
- Historic homes and neighborhoods should be protected.
- Natural habitats and key wildlife areas should be preserved.
- SIU should be recognized as a community asset. Modernizing buildings and focusing on campus connectivity can continuously establish campus as a community asset. Preserving campus recreational spaces like Campus Lake Trail is important.
- Expand trails and greenways throughout Carbondale.
- Promote agricultural education and environmental stewardship.

- It is important to maintain and enhance parks and public spaces, ensuring they remain safe, family-friendly gathering spots for recreation and events.
- Carbondale should support well-designed short-term rentals.

Below is a summary of the responses for the locations identified to grow:

- Carbondale should enhance streetscaping, encourage façade improvements, particularly along the Strip and city gateways, to create a more inviting and cohesive urban environment.
- Respondents prioritize the reduction of car dependency by improving public transportation, expanding multi-use paths, and considering pedestrian-only zones in key business areas.
- Carbondale should repurpose vacant properties, including the mall, into vibrant mixed-use spaces that integrate residential, commercial, and recreational uses.
- The Eurma C Hayes Center should be invested in and established as a dynamic community hub.
- Expand parks, and incorporate public art, sculptures, and gathering spaces to enhance Carbondale's livability.
- Improve and expand sports facilities, skate parks, and splash pads while upgrading existing amenities like Piles Fork and Meridian Park.
- Explore indoor food production as part of sustainable development efforts.
- Attract businesses and distribution centers while providing incentives for entrepreneurs.
- Address traffic safety with alternative roadway designs, including roundabouts and improved sidewalk infrastructure.

Below is a summary of the responses for the locations identified as wanting to see change:

- Many neighborhoods within Carbondale could become small neighborhood business districts.
- Respondents note that some intersections and roadways, such as those near SIU and Route 13, are inefficient and unsafe, with suggestions for roundabouts and road reconfigurations.
- Sidewalk infrastructure and pedestrian crossings are inadequate in several areas, being too narrow or poorly connected; widening sidewalks to at least 6 feet is recommended for accessibility.
- It is noted that the area around the new Amtrak station is blighted with vacant lots, creating a poor first impression; prioritizing redeveloping the area with thriving businesses should be a high priority.
- Certain commercial zones, particularly noted, along Main Street, suffer from poor design and lack of cohesion; a re-envisioning effort could focus on reducing driveways and curb cuts, creating better urban synergy.
- Some underutilized spaces, such the malls and vacant lots, should be repurposed into a diverse range of community assets like parks, mixed-use developments, or recreational facilities to enhance livability.
- Many of the residences near campus need upgraded. Joint housing options should be explored.
- Carbondale should prioritize tree planting as well as maintaining existing greenspace.
- Within the Strip, parking solutions should be explored. Shared parking lots are a recommended solution.

D. Participation

Activity Satisfaction

People indicated they appreciated the opportunity to provide input and left positive reviews on the activities and facilitation. 82% of exit questionnaire respondents reported that they were ‘very’ comfortable doing the workshop activities. For example, one respondent wrote, “[The Big Ideas Workshop was] very well planned, very well run, well-advertised, lots of listening and sharing”. Another participant wrote, “It was very organized, and I appreciate each table had someone guiding the talk and interactions.” Some people indicated that they found the mapping activity confusing. The team will consider ways of simplifying any similar activities in the future.

Who we heard from

Round 1 produced 190 total exit questionnaires through the different avenues of participation. However, not all respondents filled out an exit questionnaire. Therefore, this summary only includes voluntary data captured.

The planning team heard from the greatest number of people through the online survey. There were 135 online survey responses and over 100 people at the in-person workshop. Overall, the planning team heard from around 230 respondents.

Individuals under the age of 24 were underrepresented, while those over the age of 65 were overrepresented. Targeting the underrepresented groups will be valuable in the next round of engagement.

E. Next Steps

This summary memo will be shared on the project website and will be used to inform draft vision, goals, and actions, as well as planning for the next round of engagement.

The information included in this document is comprised of opinions of individual respondents to surveys and interviews, and is not necessarily the opinion of any entity named herein.