

Midtown CRA Community Engagement Summary

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The Midtown CRA Plan Update is intended to reflect substantial and targeted input from the community, City staff, and stakeholders which is gathered using a variety of outreach tools. The Lakeland CRA and Consultant have been working together to accomplish public outreach through a variety of efforts including stakeholder interviews, an initial public meeting to introduce the project, and an online survey and website. Below is a summary of the community engagement as of February 20, 2026 and a brief overview of the overarching themes that were revealed during the outreach. A more detailed account will be included in the Midtown CRA Plan Update.

Stakeholder Meetings

RMA first held a Kickoff Meeting with pertinent City Department on August 26, 2025, to gather input from these departments that work with the CRA. This included interviews with:

- Public Safety: LPD, LFD, Neighborhood Liaison Unit, CRA Police Unit
- Utilities and ROW: Water/Wastewater, Lakeland Electric, Public Works Admin, PW Engineering, Lakes & Stormwater
- Public Realm Planning: Public Works Traffic Ops, Growth & Transportation Planning, Parks & Rec Admin
- Community and Economic Development: CED Admin, Planning, Economic Development, Neighborhoods, Housing, Code Enforcement

In addition, seven key stakeholders in the community were interviewed during September 2025-February 2026 to understand their key issues and ideas. Interviewees included representatives from:

- Watson Clinic
- Lakeland Regional Health
- Lakeland Chamber of Commerce
- Lakeland Vision
- Lakes Church
- Detroit Tigers
- Lakeland EDC

Collectively, stakeholders identified a few main issues. These include the following:

- Entrances into Midtown don't show well.
- Don't have housing options for professional level jobs in Midtown although employment clusters are located there.
- Having stellar schools is important to attract top talent.
- Hard to attract retail and restaurants with market targets.
- Incentives not necessary for business attraction of large businesses
- Promote uniqueness.
- People want high-wage jobs here in Lakeland.

- Location of community service organizations in Midtown is a concern.
- Hard to change some undesirable uses if have long-term lease.
- Road construction projects causing traffic issues.
- Safety concerns
- Concern about gentrification and NIMBYs
- Workforce upscaling opportunities desired.
- Public transportation and childcare are challenges for workers.

Open House Event

On November 6, 2025, the Lakeland CRA and respective consultant teams held an Open House to introduce the CRA Plan Update projects to the community. At the Midtown CRA tables, participants were asked to:

- Place dots where investment should occur on a map that identified CRA completed projects.
- Tape play money on the type of projects the CRA should invest in on a monopoly game-like board.
- Provide ideas to create a welcoming environment and identify the businesses, development, or transportation they would like to see in Midtown by writing on post-its and placing them on a board.
- Give input on initiatives in place and ones needed to create a safer environment by writing on post-its and placing them on a board.

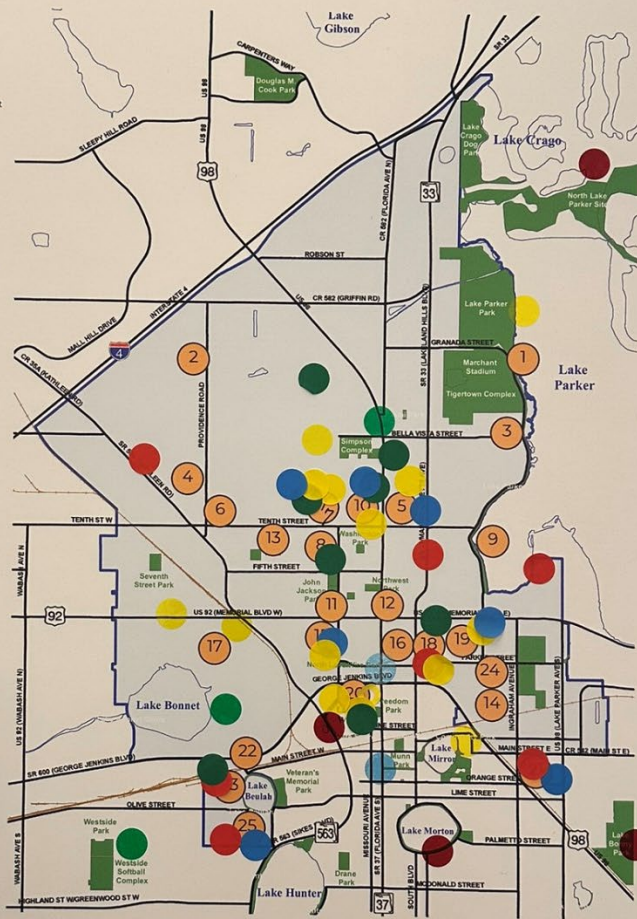
Below are images of the boards, and as you can see the overarching themes were:

- Residential and Affordable Housing were the top category desired for investment, followed by New Developments and Street Improvements
- The major corridors of US 98, Memorial Boulevard, Lakeland Hills Boulevard, and George Jenkins, while the neighborhood corridors of Parker Street, 10th St., Kathleen Rd. and MLK Ave. are where folks want to see investment along with The Bottoms
- More parking and public transit options, especially free options, are desired.
- People would like to see grocery stores, restaurants, and recreation offerings.
- To create a welcoming environment more landmarks, trails, sidewalks, streetscape improvements, art works, beautification, retail & restaurants, community policing innovations, clean-up, and traffic improvements are wanted.
- The initiatives that are in place that create a safer environment include southwest side accomplishments, roadway safety improvements, permit and impact fees, while initiatives that should be in place include homeless programs, parking, bike lanes & road improvements, cultural assets and community spaces, affordable housing, covered bus stops, and more transportation options

INVESTMENT: WHERE

MIDTOWN CRA Projects Map Project (2001 Midtown CRA Redevelopment Plan Action Item No.)

1. Lake Parker Shared-Use Path (1.20)
2. Providence Rd. Complete Street (1.12) - Planned
3. Lake Parker Dr. Crosswalks (1.20)
4. West 14th Street Pedestrian Enhancement (1.45)
5. Parkview Pl. Pedestrian Crossing (2.19)
6. Intersection Improvements (10th St. & Providence Rd.) (1.45)
7. Dakota Place (Senior Housing, Planned) (4.1)
8. Kettles Ave. Sidewalk (1.7)
9. Lake Parker Dr. Crosswalks (1.20)
10. 10th St. Improvements (1.36)
11. MLK Improvements (Memorial to 10th St.) (1.37)
12. US 98 Median Improvements (3.1)
13. Lincoln Square (1.48)
14. Ingraham Ave. Improvements (2.12)
15. MLK Ave. Improvements (Myrtle St. to Memorial Blvd.) (1.37)
16. Mass Market Redevelopment Area (1.34)
17. Bonnet Springs Park (1.16)
18. Parker St. Neighborhood Park (1.26)
19. E. Parker Street Improvements (1.27)
20. Bartow Rd. Landscape Buffer (1.23)
21. East Main St. Beautification (1.27)
22. Five-Points Roundabout (1.8)
23. Lake Beulah Trail (1.14)
24. Midtown Lofts (4.1)
25. Twin Lakes (Senior Housing) (4.1)



Legend
 Parks — Roads
 Water Bodies — Midtown CRA



WHERE do you think funds need to be spent in the Midtown CRA?



INVESTMENT: WHAT



WHAT do you think funds need to be spent on in the Midtown CRA?



Survey & Website

On October 15, 2025, the website, produced by the Downtown CRA Plan consultant team, was launched along with an online survey that was produced by each respective consultant team with input from CRA staff. As of February 18, 2026, there have been 410 responses. A majority of responses to the Midtown CRA survey are from visitors/interested parties, but 35% of responses are from Midtown residents. A detailed analysis of the survey results will be included as an exhibit of the Midtown CRA Plan Update; however, we are seeing a few themes from the responses, namely:

- Safer sidewalks should be top priority for public realm projects. Landscaping, Lighting, and more green spaces were second tier priorities.
- Grocery stores/food markets/bodegas were the most wanted businesses followed by dinner restaurants and entertainment venues.
- Mixed-use development (residential or office above ground floor commercial) is the type of project most wanted on vacant lots along major or neighborhood corridors.
- Transportation and traffic issues have biggest impact on quality of life.
- Townhomes and more homes for sale are the kinds of housing options most desired.
- Preserving historic buildings and sites is the best way to celebrate Midtown's rich history.
- Streetscape improvements (trees, lighting, benches) and Beautification of public spaces (parks, lakes, etc.) are most important focus for public investment.
- There is room for improvement in how people would describe Midtown.

In addition to the online survey, the public can also leave comments on the website on an interactive map. The comments left so far have indicated a desire to see the following in the Midtown CRA:

- Grocery store
- More restaurants and retail
- Safer walkability
- Gateways at major entrances (i.e. from I-4, Memorial Blvd., Kathleen Rd.)
- Opportunity for a park in The Bottoms
- Expansion of the CRA in the southwest
- Attractive affordable housing for young professionals

Likewise, issues in the CRA have also been pointed out on the interactive map including:

- Dumping
- Dangerous road conditions
- Park safety

Other Events

The Lakeland CRA staff has also been ensuring that they are reaching out to the public about the Midtown CRA Plan Update effort. CRA staff have attended or have facilitated the following:

- CRA Open House – 11/6/25
- Downtown Lakeland's First Friday Event – 12/5
- Florida Children's Museum Day of Caring Event – 1/10/26
- 48th Annual Rev. Dr. MLK Jr Parade – 1/17/26
- Downtown Lakeland's Farmer's Market – 1/24/26

- January pop-ups at Coleman-Bush – 1/27/26 & 1/29/26
- CRA Advisory Board Retreat – 2/5/26
- City Commission Project Update Workshop – 2/13/26
- 2026 Biz Bash – 2/18/26
- Neighborhood Association Coalition Quarterly Meeting – 2/19/26

Still to Attend:

- Black History Festival – 2/21/26
- February/March pop-ups at Larry Jackson Library - TBD
- February/March pop-ups at Simpson Park - TBD

Upcoming Events

CRA staff and a representative from the consultant will attend the 2/21/26, Black History Festival at Coleman-Bush. And although we have already garnered great public input, we still have another major effort coming on March 24, 2026. On this day we will be meeting with neighborhood organization leaders, consumer-driven businesses, and major employers in focus groups. We plan to meet with leaders of the following neighborhoods:

- Paul A. Diggs
- Valencia/Pinehurst
- Webster Park North
- Webster Park South
- Oranewood
- Hillside Manor
- Harmony Hills
- East Kathleen
- West Kathleen
- Gladys Leggett
- Jewel Avenue
- Crescent Heights
- Lake Beulah
- Lake Bonnet
- Lake Bonny
- North Lake Wire
- Parker Street
- Shore Acres

We will also be reaching out to consumer-driven businesses in categories including:

- Food & Beverage
- Personal Services
- Retail
- Services
- Entertainment

In addition, outreach will be made to major employers including:

- Colorado Boxed Beef

- Pepperidge Farms
- Tampa Maid Foods
- Mission Foods
- McKesson Corporation
- ITW Professional Automotive
- Cardinal Health