

THE CITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REPORT

MAY 23, 2017





TABLE OF CONTENTS

- A. INTRODUCTION**
- B. ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT**
- C. WHAT WE'VE LEARNED**
- D. SUMMARY: PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE & WORKSHOP**
- E. SUMMARY: POP-UP #1 - COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT**
- F. SUMMARY: POP-UP #2 - JOINT PLANNING BOARD POP-UP**
- G. SUMMARY: POP-UP #3 - COMMUNITY SHOWCASE**
- H. SUMMARY: POP-UP #4 - CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEETING**
- I. SUMMARY: POP-UP #5 - FARMER'S MARKET**
- J. SUMMARY: ONLINE ENGAGEMENT**
- K. WHAT'S NEXT?**
- L. APPENDIX**

A. INTRODUCTION

The City of St. Joseph has an exciting opportunity to establish a Comprehensive Plan Update that identifies strategies and actions to achieve community goals and visions. As part of this work, St. Joseph and other members of the project management team are reaching out and engaging the public using many different tools and approaches. These efforts, conducted in Fall 2017, to date include:

- Five (5) Pop-Up engagement events held in coordination with larger community events
- Public Meetings (March 8th, 2017)
- Online survey
- Interviews

B. ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Engagement activities yielded a rich variety of information regarding resident ideas and preferences for the future of St. Joseph. This document summarizes what we learned through in-person Pop-Up engagement activities and an Open House. Descriptions for individual events completed are included, as well as an Appendix with additional information about community engagement and its importance for the project.

C. WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

KEY THEMES FROM DOT ACTIVITY

Dot boards presenting a range of options for priorities for St. Joseph were made available for participants at each of the engagement events. Participants could select up to five of twenty-four options. The most popular options selected during the engagement phase were:

- Sustainable energy
- Expand indoor recreation opportunities
- A strengthened downtown
- Connections between the College of St. Benedict and the City



Source: Community Design Group

Local businesses in the downtown area are a main attraction in St. Joseph.

KEY THEMES FROM POST-ITS RECEIVED

Written comments were also collected at all first-round Pop-Up engagement events. The comments were then sorted into three broad categories: what residents love about the City of St. Joseph, what challenges they currently face, and what they envision for St. Joseph in the future.

ASSETS: THINGS PEOPLE LOVE ABOUT THE CITY OF ST. JOSEPH

Atmosphere and Character

- Residents love the small-town character of the City. They can get to places quickly because of the small size and lack of traffic congestion. They love the small businesses in the downtown area. Because of the close-knit nature of the community, the residents also feel close to the government and the police.

Outdoor Recreational Activities

- Residents enjoy that the City is the start to the Lake Wobegon Trail and there are so many parks available throughout the City. They love the proximity to nature as well as the community garden and farmer's market.

Businesses

- Residents wrote that they love the gathering spaces at local businesses, such as the Local Blend and the Bad Habit Brewery. The "personal" feel of the Minnesota Street and College Street intersection with eclectic businesses creates a place that residents want to visit.

CHALLENGES: WHAT DO PEOPLE WISH THEY COULD CHANGE ABOUT ST. JOSEPH?

Infrastructure

- The most mentioned infrastructure issue was that Highway 75 bisects the city. Pedestrian crossing improvements are needed across Highway 75 as well as traffic mediation.

Community Differences

- The divide between the college students and residents creates a sense of "others" within the community.

Funding and Resources

- There is no high school available within St. Joseph. Residents want to see resources being used to create a high school as well as a public library. They also mention that there is a need for public transportation for non-students.

SAMPLING OF COMMENTS RECEIVED FOR KEY THEMES

OPPORTUNITIES: SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Improve mobility across Highway 75. Although Highway 75 is a much needed corridor to get through St. Joseph and connect to St. Cloud and Interstate 94, it does **bisect** the City.

- “Highway 75 divides the city and is a busy road”
- “Motorists don’t stop for pedestrians”

Create a stronger relationship between the college and the residents. Residents get the sense that they are an “other” within the City and want to feel more connected. The College stated that they want to hold more events for the community to bridge the gap.

- “There is a divide between the college/monastery and the ‘locals’”
- “The college wants to hold more events, especially in the summer. We have quite a few students that stick around and serve in the community”

Create a plan to implement more public facilities. Although there is a long process to institute a new school within the St. Cloud School District, coordination among governing bodies will keep all residents informed of the process.

- “We need a high school in St. Joseph”
- “There is a lack of a public library”



Highway 75 bisects the city.

ASSETS: THINGS PEOPLE LOVE ABOUT THE CITY

The atmosphere and character. People love the “small-town feel” and the friendly people of the city.

- “I love the small size. It is a town that keeps its hometown core and character”
- “There is a smaller population so you get to know people”
- “There is a rural feeling, but you still get a quality education”
- “The helpfulness and growing comfort between the ‘town and gown’. The lay people and the religious folks”

Outdoor Recreational Activities. Residents appreciate that the City is the start to the Lake Wobegon trail and there are many parks available throughout the City. They love the proximity to nature as well as the community garden and farmer’s market.

- “I love the proximity to nature. The St. John’s Arboretum, the lakes of the area, and Lake Wobegon Trail”
- “I love the involvement with sustainable garden and local produce”



Source: City of St. Joseph

Lake Wobegon Trail travels east to west of the City.

D. EVENT SUMMARY: PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE & WORKSHOP

A community workshop and open house were held at the St. Joseph Government Center on Wednesday, March 8th, 2017. The workshop ran from 6 pm to 8 pm with a 30-minute open house taking place prior to the meeting at 5:30 pm.

The project team set up a table and boards around the room where the open house would be held. The boards outlined project goals for participants and offered opportunities for feedback regarding how they would prioritize goals for St. Joseph's future. The project team received two written comments and over 50 stickers responses. Cards with a QR code were given to residents so they could share their opinions and ideas at a more convenient time through the project survey website.

Activities included:

- Ranking top 5 priorities for St. Joseph's future
- Using sticky notes to come up with their own improvements
- Map exercises to share their favorite places in the city, areas that they think could be improved, or areas that could use investment

KEY POINTS

- The most popular suggestion during the workshop was to prioritize "a strengthened downtown" with approximately 61% of all participants ranking this in their top 5.
- The next most popular suggestions were "encourage more active and healthy lifestyles", "preserve historic buildings", and "preserve our identity" all at approximately 44%.
- In the map activity, participants identified Highway 75 as a challenge because it limits pedestrian mobility and safety.
- Additionally, during the map activity, participants highlighted the "historic downtown" as an asset because it is "convenient and walkable." The College of Saint Benedict and St. Benedict's Monastery were labeled as positive aspects of the community. The Wobegon Trail and facility were also identified as valuable mobility components of St. Joseph, and participants advocated that it were extended.



Source: Community Design Group

Participants wrote on sticky notes to provide ideas.



Source: Community Design Group

Aerial Maps used to identify assets and challenges of the city.



Source: Community Design Group

Attendees worked together to find locations that need improvements.

E. EVENT SUMMARY: POP-UP #1 - COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT

A Pop-Up workshop was held at the College of St. Benedict on Thursday, March 16th, 2017. A table was set up at Gorecki Hall during lunch and passing hour from 1pm - 3pm. The College of St. Benedict was chosen as an opportunity to connect with St. Joseph residents and CSB students that may not necessarily attend public meetings.

The project team set up a table and boards in a primary walkway of the hall. The boards outlined project goals for participants and offered opportunities for feedback regarding how they would prioritize goals for St. Joseph's future. The project team received about two written comments and over 350 sticker engagements.

Activities included:

- Ranking top 5 priorities for St. Joseph's future
- Using sticky notes to come up with their own improvements
- Map exercises to share their favorite places in the city, areas that they think could be improved, or areas that could use investment

Cards with a QR code were given to residents so they could share their opinions and ideas at a more convenient time through the project survey website.

KEY POINTS

- The most popular suggestion during engagement activities was "Improving connections between St. Benedict and the city" with approximately 72% of all students ranking this choice in their top 5.
- The next two most popular suggestions were "bring more places for daily shopping into town" (59%) and "expand outdoor recreation activities" (57%).
- During the map activity, students highlighted the College of St. Benedict and the downtown area as an asset to St. Joseph. They also suggested building more convenience and grocery stores inside the town.



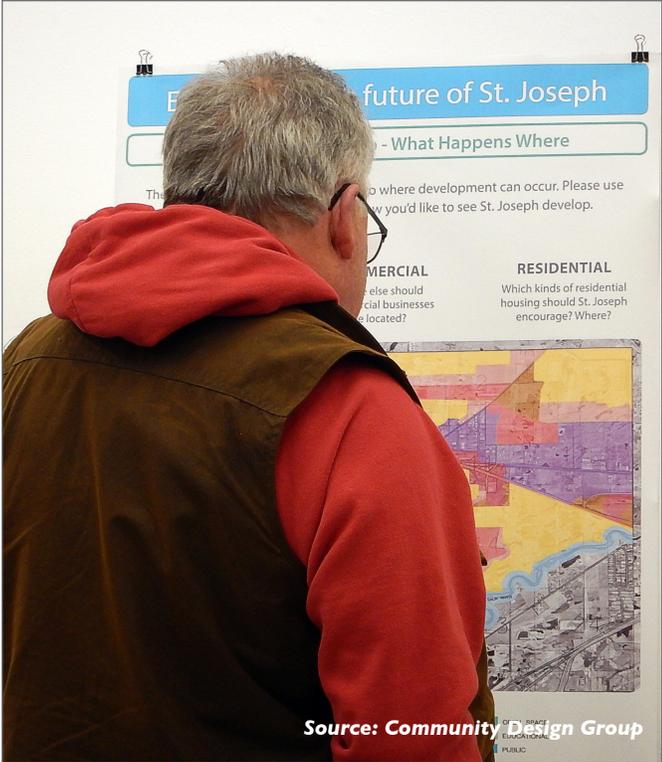
Source: Community Design Group

*Students attending pop-up workshop at
College of St. Benedict.*



Source: Community Design Group

Participants discuss the types of zoning areas that exist in St. Joseph.



Source: Community Design Group

Attendee reading zoning board at event.



Source: Community Design Group

Aerial Maps used to identify assets and challenges of the city.

F. EVENT SUMMARY: POP-UP #2 - JOINT PLANNING BOARD POP-UP

A second Pop-Up workshop was held at the Government Center prior to a Joint Planning Board meeting on Thursday, March 16th, 2017 from 6pm-7pm. This event was chosen as an important opportunity to connect with both members of the city and township about their goals for the City's future.

The project team set up informational boards and activities in the entryway of the building. Boards outlined project goals for participants and offered feedback regarding the Comprehensive Plan. The project team received two comments and 7 participants in the sticker activity. Participants were invited to engage in a sticker activity that listed twenty-four suggested priorities where they chose the top five options that most appealed to them. Handouts with a QR code were given to event attendees so they could share their opinions and ideas at a more convenient time through the project survey website.

Activities included:

- Ranking top 5 priorities for St. Joseph's future
- Using sticky notes to come up with improvements
- Map exercises to share their favorite places in the city, areas that they think could be improved, or areas that could use investment

Cards with a QR code were given to participants so they could share their opinions and ideas at a more convenient time through the project survey website.

KEY POINTS

- The most popular suggestions during engagement activities were "making the city more bikeable" and "expanding indoor recreational activities" both at 60% of participants indicating that this is a top priority.
- The next three most popular suggestions were "Increasing focus on sustainable energy", "preserving our identity" and "strengthening the downtown" (all at 45%).
- In the map activity, participants noted that the Lake Wobegon Trail was an asset to the community, and suggested expanding it. Participants also selected the downtown area as an asset. Highway 75 was identified as a dangerous crossing area for pedestrians.

G. EVENT SUMMARY: POP-UP #3 - COMMUNITY SHOWCASE

A Pop-Up workshop was held at the Kennedy Community School on Saturday morning, April 1st, 2017 from 10 am to 1 pm. The Community Showcase was chosen as an event because community members were already gathering and engaging to learn more about their community. This event was chosen as an important opportunity to connect with members of the community that may not typically attend a public meeting.

The project team set up a tent and boards in the gym alongside community businesses. Project team members engaged the visitors as they walked from booth to booth. The boards that were displayed outlined project goals and offered participants several ways to give feedback. One activity used aerial maps to show areas of the city that residents like or want improved. A second board offered a sticker activity for participants to rank their top 5 priorities for the City of St. Joseph. The final board asked participants what they love about St. Joseph and what challenges they face living in the city. The project team recorded 70 participants in the sticker activity and about 30 comments collected. Handouts with a QR code were given to event attendees so that they could share their opinions and ideas at a more convenient time through the project survey website.

KEY POINTS

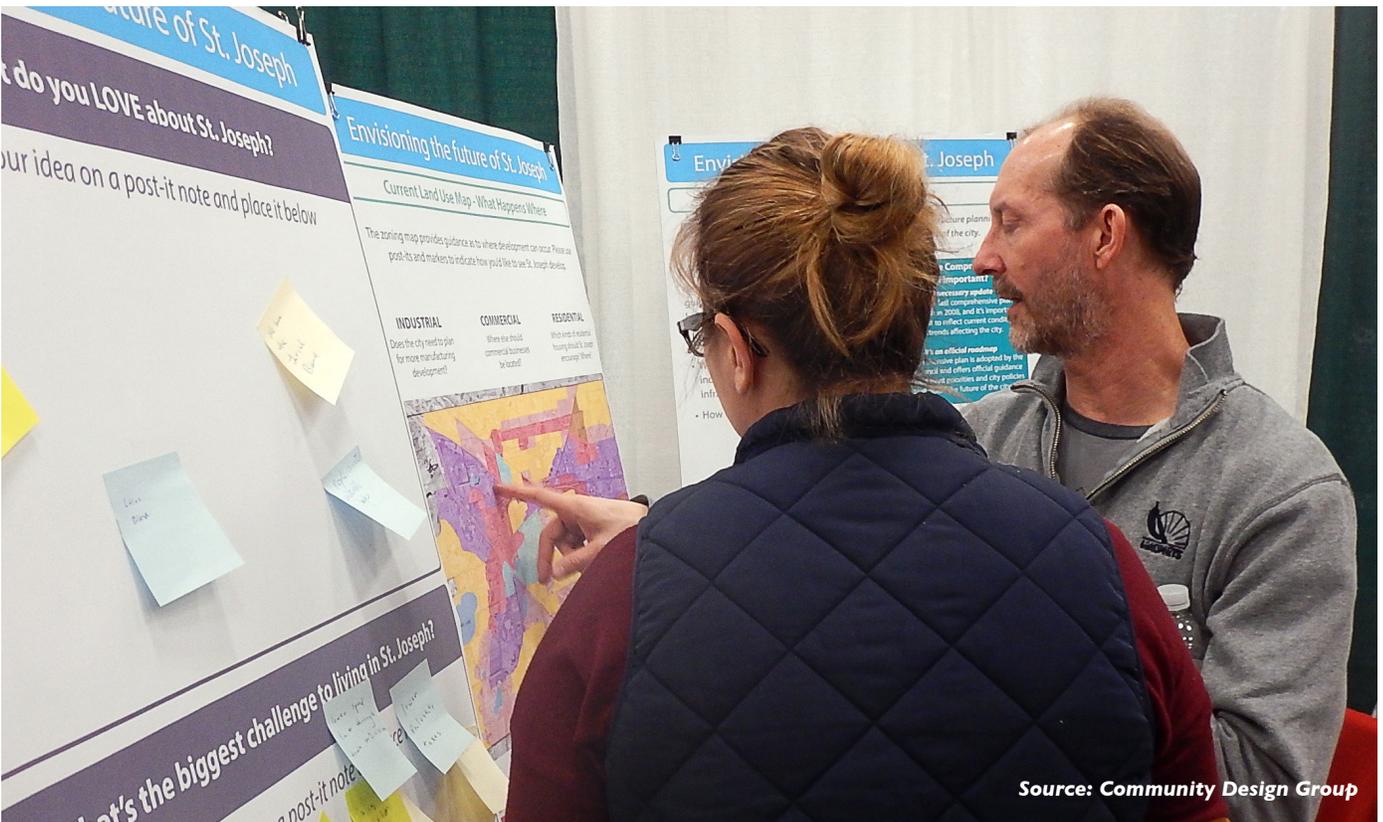
- The most popular suggestion during engagement activities was “Expand indoor recreation” with 43% of all participants ranking this in their top 5.
- The next three most popular suggestions were “expand outdoor recreation” (34%) and “preserve our identity” (33%) and “preserve historical buildings” (31%).
- Several written comments requested better infrastructure for senior citizens. This was also reflected through comments suggesting organized activities for seniors.
- During the event, attendees particularly highlighted Highway 75 as a dangerous crossing for pedestrians.



Participant viewing dot-board at Community Showcase.



A comment box was available for participants at the event.



Aerial maps were provided to show participants current city zoning.



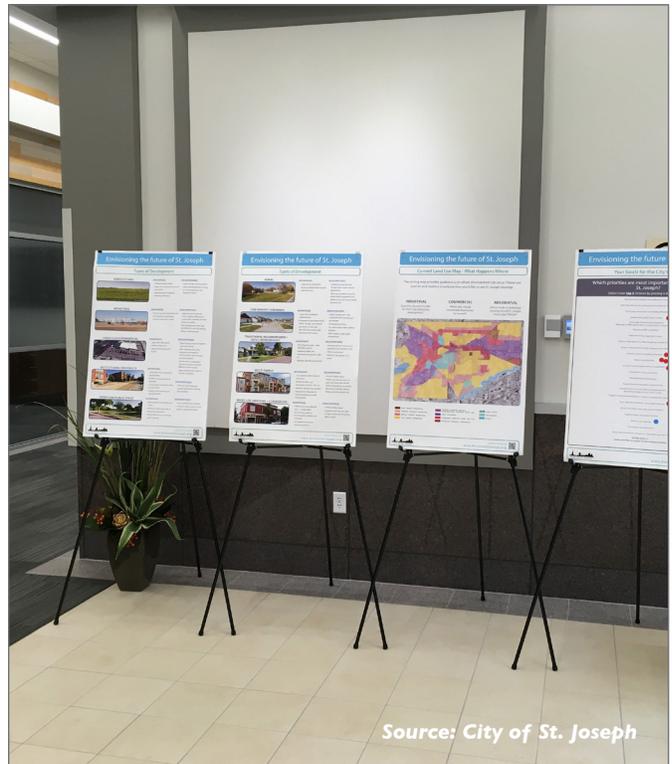
Source: City of St. Joseph

Participants discuss the plan updates.



Source: City of St. Joseph

Attendee reading zoning board at event.



Source: City of St. Joseph

Boards displayed information regarding the plan updates.

H. EVENT SUMMARY: POP-UP #4 - CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEETING

A fourth Pop-Up workshop was held at the Government Center prior to a Chamber of Commerce meeting on Wednesday, May 10th, 2017 from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. This event was chosen as an important opportunity to connect with both members of the Chamber and residents about their goals for the City's future.

The project team set up informational boards and activities in the entryway of the building. Boards outlined project goals for participants and offered feedback regarding the Comprehensive Plan. Participants were invited to engage in a sticker activity that listed twenty-four suggested priorities where they chose the five options that most appealed to them. Handouts with a QR code were given to event attendees so that they could share their opinions and ideas at a more convenient time through the project survey website.

Activities included:

- Ranking top 5 priorities for St. Joseph's future
- Using sticky notes to come up with improvements

KEY POINTS

- The most popular suggestion during the engagement activity was "increase housing opportunity and availability" with 75% of participants choosing this answer.
- The next two most popular suggestions were "add living wage jobs downtown" and "attracting more families" (all at 50%).

I. EVENT SUMMARY: POP-UP #5 - FARMER'S MARKET

A Pop-Up workshop was held at the St. Joseph Farmers Market on Friday afternoon, May 12th, 2017 from 3 pm to 6:30 pm. The Farmer's Market was chosen as an event because community members were already gathering and engaging to learn more about their community. This event was chosen as an important opportunity to connect with members of the community that might not typically attend a public meeting.

The project team set up a table and boards in the parking lot alongside community businesses. Project team members engaged the visitors as they walked from booth to booth. The boards that were displayed outlined project goals and offered participants several ways to give feedback. One board offered a sticker activity for participants to rank their top 5 priorities for the City of St. Joseph. The second board asked participants what they love about St. Joseph and what challenges they face living there.

Activities included:

- Ranking top 5 priorities for St. Joseph's in the future
- Using sticky notes to come up with improvements

Handouts with a QR code were given to event attendees so they could share their opinions and ideas at a more convenient time through the project survey website.

KEY POINTS

- The most popular suggestion during the engagement activity was "add more bike lanes and become more bike-friendly" with 66% of all participants ranking this in their top 5.
- Another popular suggestion was "improving public transportation" with 56% of participants choosing this option.
- Several written comments requested dog parks among other new infrastructure.



Source: City of St. Joseph

Boards were located alongside booths owned by community members.



Source: City of St. Joseph

Participants pose for a picture at the Farmer's Market.

J. EVENT SUMMARY: ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

A survey was posted on the project website the last week of February 2017. The questions were divided into the following topics:

- Your Vision and Priorities for St. Joseph
- Residential Development
- Employment
- Commercial and Industrial Development
- Transportation
- Your experiences with employment and housing in St. Joseph
- Improving planning and engagement
- Demographic questions

At the completion of the survey on May 23rd, there were 373 total participants with 248 completed responses.

The survey gave participants opportunities to give feedback about the above topics. Several questions, including one about their priorities for the future of the city, included the same options that were available to participants at the in-person Open House and Pop-Up events.

KEY POINTS

- The the most popular priority for survey participants was “strengthening the downtown” with 30% of all participants ranking this in their top 5.
- The next three most popular suggestions were “expanding outdoor recreation” (30%) “expanding indoor recreation” (27%).
- Several written comments requested building a high school within St. Joseph. This is reflected by 13% of survey participants writing comments regarding a lack of secondary school.

K. WHAT'S NEXT?

Additional Pop-Ups will be held after the completion of the first round of the Draft Comprehensive Plan Update.

ENVISION ST. JOSEPH - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

HOME LATEST NEWS ABOUT GET INVOLVED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATERIALS BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS MORE...

We need your help to develop a vision for the future of St. Joseph!

The future of St. Joseph is in your hands!
[Plan your own pop-up engagement session](#)

What is this project about?

The project website offers event schedule, engagement response summary, and online survey.



Source: Community Design Group

L. APPENDIX

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community outreach and engagement is critical to the successful development and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Proactive, robust and community-oriented engagement is vital to shaping the direction of the plan and increasing awareness, understanding, and ongoing support for the plan as it guides the growth and development of St. Joseph in a way that supports the needs and aspirations of residents and students.

REACHING DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Consistent with St. Joseph's goal of engaging all communities IMG_1225.JPG, targeted outreach focused on organizations and partners serving minority, low-income, and/or health disparity communities will be conducted where possible.

ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Take the meeting to the people

One of the keys for building public engagement is to make it easier and more convenient for more people to participate. The project team has taken engagement to places where people are already congregating, setting up tabling and Pop-Up workshops at community events and popular destinations. This makes it easier for community members to provide their comments and guidance without having to attend a separate meeting.

User-friendly materials

To effectively communicate with members of the public, we have developed welcoming, user-friendly, jargon-free project materials. These materials are visually attractive and written with easy-to-understand language. The materials are oriented to residents who may not be familiar with planning processes and projects. Bright colored dot stickers, post-it notes, pens, and markers are provided for people to share comments.

Questions asked at our engagement events

- What do you LOVE about St. Joseph?
- What is a challenge to living in St. Joseph?
- Which priorities are most important to the future of St. Joseph?
- Which areas within St. Joseph do you like? Not like? Think we should prioritize?

All of the comments and votes received at the engagement events were processed, analyzed, and summarized in this document.



Envisioning the future of St. Joseph

What are the opportunities and challenges facing our community?

How can we create a more vibrant, resilient, and inclusive future for St. Joseph?

What are the key priorities for our community's future?

How can we ensure that our future is built on a strong foundation of community values and input?

Envisioning the future of St. Joseph

What are the opportunities and challenges facing our community?

How can we create a more vibrant, resilient, and inclusive future for St. Joseph?

What are the key priorities for our community's future?

How can we ensure that our future is built on a strong foundation of community values and input?

Envisioning the future of St. Joseph

What are the opportunities and challenges facing our community?

How can we create a more vibrant, resilient, and inclusive future for St. Joseph?

What are the key priorities for our community's future?

How can we ensure that our future is built on a strong foundation of community values and input?