

Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Clearance

Meet in the Street and Public Open House Summary

In July 2017, the 16th Street Mall Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Clearance project kicked off its broader public outreach efforts with two engagement opportunities: an information table at the mall's Meet in the Street event, and two open house sessions held at the Regional Transportation District's (RTD) headquarters. City stakeholders, partners and agencies including the Downtown Denver Partnership, City and County of Denver and RTD distributed flyers to key stakeholders and promoted both events through social media and on their websites. The project team also canvassed along 16th Street Mall, handing out more than 200 flyers and posters to local businesses and properties.

On July 22, several project team members staffed an information table at the Meet in the Street event from noon-4 p.m., just outside the Paramount Café between Welton and Glenarm streets. Team members informed and directly engaged nearly 50 community members throughout the day providing participants with the project's purpose and need, study boundaries, schedule, prior studies leading up to where we are now, and public input to-date. A diverse group of community members including downtown and area residents, along with mall employees and occasional visitors, completed 11 comment forms in-person and/or by mail that provided valuable feedback on what they find is working well on the mall, their concerns of current conditions, and what they would consider a success for the future mall. The raw comments are included at the end of this document. Below are the common themes collected from Meet in the Street:

1. *What do you think currently works well on the Mall? Why?*

- **The MallRide** – Several community members said they like the MallRide and how it connects people from Civic Center to Union Station. A few noted how they would like the MallRide to run more frequently during weekends.
- **Multi-modal Access** – Other members of the public noted how accessible the Mall is and more specifically, how it's bicycle and pedestrian friendly. Many commented that they would like extended hours for bicyclists throughout the weekdays, not just the weekends.
- **Activation/Aesthetics** – A few community members agreed that events such as Meet in the Street and the restaurant patios help increase activation along Mall. Another mentioned by extending restaurant patios, widening pedestrian access and sidewalk navigation would be considerably easier. Others commented on the efforts and success of the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) and the Business Improvement District's (BID) contribution making the mall cleaner and more visually appealing. Some encouraged this program be continued and increase the pay for BID clean-up staff.

2. *What concerns do you have about the current conditions of the Mall? Why?*

- **Safety** – Security and crime were the highest concerns for community members, especially in the case of homelessness and panhandling. Several said this issue leads

to loitering and damage along the mall. While a few agreed that there has been an increase in the police presence, several commented the officers congregate in isolated areas and do not scan and spread out along with the mall. Some suggested the use of private security as similar to the area around Union Station.

- Paver Materials and Design** – Many community members stressed the danger of the current Mall pavers including the potholes, cracks, and slick material, especially during inclement weather as well as frustration from the ongoing maintenance of the pavers and related inconvenience. Some suggested replacing the current material with a designed concrete while others opposed concrete. Several felt the material should be replaced but noted the importance to keep the historic design of the Mall (i.e., southwestern/snake/diamond pattern).

What would you consider a success for the future Mall?

- Activation/Placemaking** – Several members of the public spoke to activation and placemaking when they shared considerations of what would be successful for the future Mall. Many mentioned they would like to see more events like Meet in the Street as well as public art exhibits to draw suburbanites. Others noted Skyline Park as an area of underutilization and opportunity to increase activation.
- Redevelopment/Expanded Retail** – Many commented on moving out older retail chains and updating with new, higher-end retail with the likes of the Magnificent Mile in Chicago and redeveloping the Market Street area. Some stakeholders expressed excitement regarding new retail on the Mall including Sephora and Target.



On July 27, the project team held an open house during two separate sessions at RTD headquarters. Nearly 30 community members attended the first session from 12-1 p.m., while close to 15 attended the 5-6 p.m. session. The same material was provided at each session.

The informative open house stations allowed stakeholders and the broader community multiple ways to directly engage and interact with the project team at various substantive areas of their choice. Stations provided baseline information on the project and how the Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Clearance builds on previous studies, most recently the Mall Experience.

In 2015, due to the significant cost to maintain the pavers, RTD began researching the option of replacing the bus lanes with an alternative surface, launching the **106** process. At the same time, the City and County of Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership launched *The Mall Experience: The Future of Denver's 16th Street Mall*, working with Gehl Studio to identify ways to help the Mall reach its full potential as a welcoming place in the heart of downtown. *The Mall Experience* also addressed concerns with pedestrians and vehicles. These prior studies informed the background information that was presented at the open house.

The open house provided attendees the opportunity to comment on the current project's Purpose and Need, tell the team what is working well, areas for improvement, and what they consider an ideal future of the Mall. Participants provided feedback on maps of the Mall and different Mall block configurations: symmetrical and asymmetrical. Raw comments collected on the maps and comments forms are included at the end of this document. Below are the themes that emerged from all public input collected at both open house sessions:

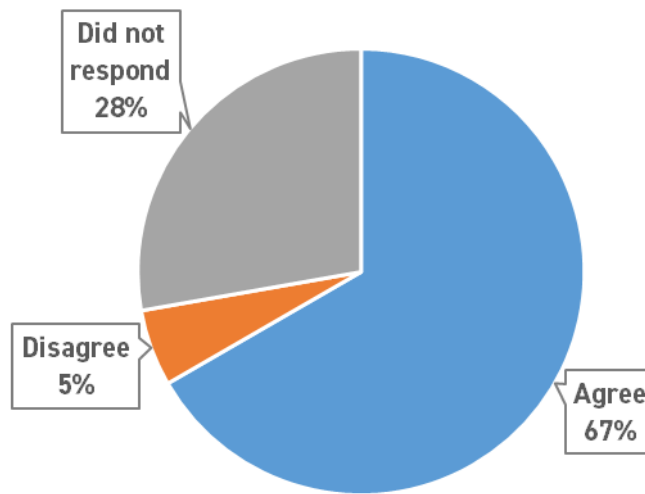
- **Paver Material/Design** – The majority of comments remarked on the danger of the current Mall pavers and its outdated design. Several community members said the current material is very slick, especially in wet weather conditions. Some suggested to project team members that the material be replaced with high quality concrete and to adhere to the historical, Western heritage of Denver (e.g., similar to the current diamond design). Others said the historical community should be responsible for replacing the pavers if they support the preservation of this material.
- **Safety/Security/Homeless** – Several community members expressed concern over their safety from the transient/homeless population along the Mall, specifically at intersections such as California Street and in and around the median amenities. Many indicated how these attractions are becoming social issues with young transients making the Mall undesirable and “unsafe.” Some suggested adding more public restrooms and suggested utilizing old buildings for police security stations and dedicated police cover along the Mall to help mitigate the crime and homeless.
- **Activation/Retail** – Many community members noted how they would like to see an increase in Mall events and additional new retail such as Target. Many expressed wanting to see more engaging activities like movies and concerts along the Mall. Some expressed to project team members that event management on the Mall can be improved and it often can be too busy.
- **RTD Shuttle Schedule/Maintenance/Transit** – A few community members explained how the MallRide does not run frequently enough and would like to see improved conditions on the inside of the free Mall shuttles. Several commented how they would

like asymmetrical blocks on the Mall and suggested adjoining buses, creating more space for the aforementioned activation/retail.

- **Green Space/Trees** – Many attendees said they wanted more trees along the Mall, creating more canopies, and they highlighted areas on the asymmetrical and symmetrical blocks where they would like to see more trees.
- **Consider previous study documentation** – There should be consideration given to design-specific feedback provided by industry experts during prior study efforts.

The following summarizes the input received from comment forms collected at the combined open house sessions:

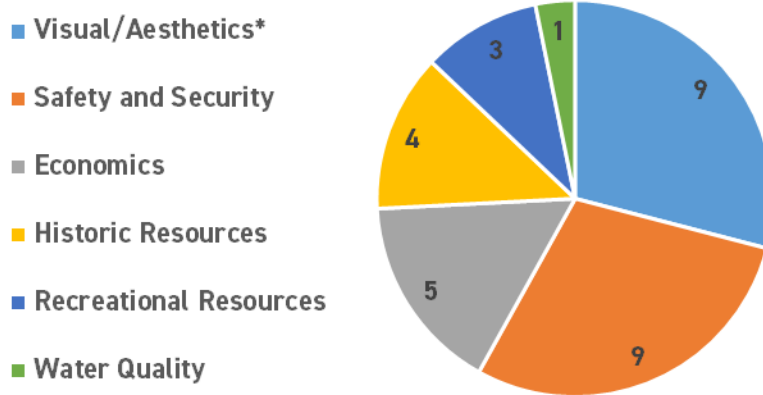
1. Do you agree with the purpose and needs for improving the 16th Street Mall?



Approximately 12 of 18 respondents were in resounding agreement with the purpose and needs for improving the 16th Street Mall. Many felt the Mall needed design, safety, and security improvements, and needs to be a destination rather than a thoroughfare. Others wanted to see the transit improvements extending to 15th and 17th streets. One commented that the Purpose and Need statement does not address the residential neighborhoods that co-exist with businesses on the Mall.

2. Select any of the below resources that you would like to provide additional comments on.

Number of responses indicated

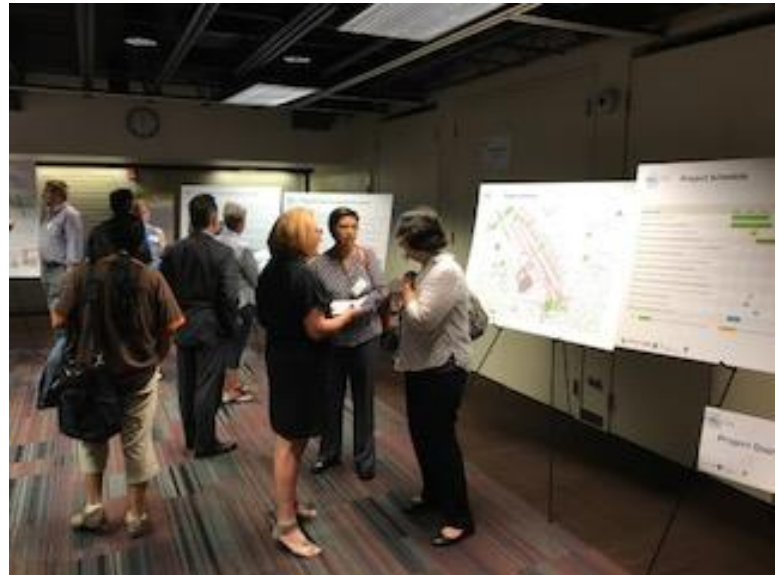


Below are some additional themes expressed in regards to the above options:

- ***Appearance** - Some community members mentioned how they would like to see more green space, trees, public art, interaction, etc. and the maintenance (e.g., cleaning/upkeep) of businesses and holding individual owners accountable for any damage or disrepair. One attendee mentioned how they like the interactive IKE boards, digital kiosks, located at intersections along the Mall that provide directions and event information for visitors.
- **Alignment** - A few community members suggested running the bus line through the center of the Mall and leave sides for pedestrians and businesses, etc., while others did not like the continuing the "asymmetric" pattern, adjoining the buses in the middle.

3. What would you consider a success for the future Mall?

- **Improvement Extension** – Some want to see the treatment extend into the cross-streets - even as far as the 14th Street bike path and 19th Street.
- **Bike/Pedestrian Access** – Several community members would like to see more access for bicycles and pedestrians, with increased bike use during the week rather than only the weekends.



16th Street Mall Meet in the Street Public Comments

Comments appear as they were written with no edits to grammar, spelling, or context.

1. Name something that works well on the 16 th Street Mall – and why?
Mall shuttle
Shuttle bus, bike racks, walkable, bicycle friendly
The Mall ride, it would be nice if it run a little more on weekends
Shuttle bus
Downtown Denver Partnership, Mall is cleaner and much more pleasant visually
Mall shuttle, special events like meet in the street
Restaurant patios help, but the patios encroach a bit too much on the sidewalks – pedestrians should get 6-8 inches returned back for easier navigation

2. What about its current condition concerns you – and why?
Crime rate at night
Too many people at times
The Mall as a whole is good. But when it comes to maintenance work the shuttle it would be nice if they did it at nights
Panhandlers, street people, survey (Greenpeace etc); urine smell! Dirty; Mall pavers – running joke for people visiting us – “Oh, they are <u>still</u> tearing up the mall?”
Panhandlers – extremely rude, eyesores, loiter and damage Meet in the Streets equipment, trash their areas of occupance, etc. etc.
RTD drivers to be more helpful for new bus riders
Crime rate, especially at night
The I.M. Pei pavers are a problem because they are slippery when wet, BUT concrete is not a solution because shoddy concrete work happens so often, i.e., the recent DIA runway that now costs about 3 million to repair
4-8 police huddled doesn't help, need to spread out & not scanning; private security are better; by light rail and the McDonalds drug deals; homeless smoking in Zen garden
Skyline Park is under-utilized, under-patrolled, “fenced off” for various issues, + not nearly as well-maintained (watered, planted, weeded, etc.) as city parks outside of downtown

3. What would you consider a success for the future Mall?
Movies and books
Events like Meet in the Streets
Bikes, more hours, not just Saturdays and Sundays
If they did more things then the already do
1) no panhandlers/ street people (which would help urine smell); 2) replace current pavers with concrete (which can be decorative to keep the “snake” theme if you feel necessary so they don't have to pull up & replace the pavers
Meet in the Streets
Bring in suburbanites with public art exhibits like laminated photographs like in Chicago
- specialty shops – an occasional new business
Keep BID staffed & better paid – the BID cleaning people do a good job doing thankless work – pay the worker bees more

16th Street Mall Open House Public Comments

Comments appear as they were written with no edits to grammar, spelling, or context.

1. Do you agree with the purpose and needs for improving the 16th Street Mall?
yes (no comment)
yes - current improvements have increased my store's sales by 20% over last year! Thank you & keep up the great work!
Yes. the Mall is a great asset but needs some help
yes - the Mall has significant need for improvement. It feels less of a destination + more of a pass-through for commuters
yes yes yes yes Also consider public restrooms (why all this space)
YES
THE NEEDS IF THEY ARE IMPORTANT IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS!
MOSTLY
Remove the homeless vagrants & normal people will want to visit & linger
Absolutely. Most Denver residents avoid the space.
You need a comment form that does not ask leading questions. I also think that this whole process is somewhat disingenuous. I don't think that you are defining things like "safety" in a different way than ordinary citizens.
yes
Yes and no. I think it should be a Pedestrian and bike access. The Mall shuttles should be moved to 15th and 17th. This will reduce the wear on the Mall and maintain the great granite design add to the vibrancy and increase the use of the Mall by peds and bikes
Yes
Yes

2. Select any of the below resources that you would like to provide additional comments on. Number of responses indicated.
Visual/Aesthetics - 9 Safety and Security - 9 Economics - 5 Historic Resources Recreational Resources - 3 Water Quality - 1

2a. Select any of the below resources that you would like to provide additional comments on. Provide comments here
I.M. Pei design elements a little dated, stronger anchor retail
Run bus line through center of Mall and leave sides for pedestrians, businesses, buskers

<p>more of security presence & emergency buttons. visually more trees, public art, interaction, etc. Cleaning & holding businesses accountable for broken windows, buildings in disrepair, etc. I also love the interactive IKE boards</p>
<p>The homeless are a huge deterrent. The amount of panhandlers asking for money makes me not want to visit the Mall. Get them off the Mall</p>
<p>I'd like to see a creative solution with 2 mix of suitable materials, such as colored concrete for the shuttle travel paths, but perhaps retaining granite pavers (or adding clay brick) in pedestrian dreds. Slip hazards might be addressed with a rough finish to the granite.</p>
<p>** NO ANSWER PROVIDED ABOVE COMMENT: SUGGEST PROJECT TEAM MAKE A PRESENTATION TO CURTIS PARK NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING FIRST THURSDAY OF MONTH AT 23RD AND CURTIS AT UNITED WAY BUILDING AT 7:00 P.M.</p>
<p>PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE FOR TRANSIT, BEGGARS ETC.</p>
<p>* no answer to previous question</p>
<p>Visuals - increase green spaces, more trees; Economic - attract local business/ authentic Denver; Rec - increase usable space for events and recreation by putting transit closer together. Middle section is currently not user-friendly</p>
<p>above none selected</p>
<p>16th Street Mall is not safe. Especially after dark. Shuttles don't run as often at night and on the weekends. People are harassed by panhandlers for spare change. Don't make the 16th St Mall a giant frat party.</p>
<p>There is significant value in historic preservation and the iconic design and architecture. It is a destination and the design is a large reason for that. The design is critical to the success of the Mall and needs to be a critical component in moving forward</p>
<p>Mall feels unsafe - I've been harassed and yelled at by people panhandling. I've seen drug use and drug paraphernalia. Visitors to town don't want to come to the Mall, because it is "dirty" and "scary." In addition, I wish there were more trees and more plants on the Mall. It would be nice if the planters contained more than just petunias - native flowers and plantings would create a more unique space and enhance biodiversity downtown. More trees would encourage the linger factor, especially when it's so hot in the summer. As the design phase gets closer, the City should add recycling receptacles and maybe have more trash cans along the corridor. More secure trash cans and more frequent trash collection would also be great, since sometimes the cans overflow. The pattern of the pavers is very pretty and should be maintained even if the type of pavers need to be changed. The pavers themselves are slick in the winter and cause people to slip and fall. It would be nice if there was a way for bicycles to safely commute on the Mall. As a downtown resident, it would be nice if there were more entertainment options on the Mall. It seems that the majority of businesses on the Mall are chain restaurants and retail. It would be a more vibrant location if there were more options that spoke to the unique character of Denver. The City should try to channel the characteristics of the re-development of Union Station (which is amazing!) into design of the Mall. Encouraging more residential development downtown may also help with the linger factor. Also ban smoking on the Mall.</p>
<p>I am concerned with the proposal to extend the "asymmetric" pattern with buses adjoining each other in the middle and trees only on one side. The existing blocks in this pattern are FAR less pleasant, due to lack of shade/canopy. The trees are on the wrong side for casting much helpful shadow. The great number of missing trees of course compounds this issue, but even if filled in they</p>

would never give the same canopy as the symmetric blocks with trees in the middle. If the center-adjointing transit approach is pursued in order to unlock the largely-unused center space, please do so in a SYMMETRIC way, with the busway 2-directions in the middle and trees on the sidewalk on BOTH sides. I can't emphasize strongly enough how deficient the experience on the current asymmetric blocks are, on both sides of the Mall, compared with the symmetric blocks, during our "300" sunny days, due to this shade/canopy issue. Don't confuse putting the buses next to each other with symmetric/asymmetric choices -- they are separate decisions.

3. What would you consider a success for the future Mall?

Finding as balance where it is comfortable to commute via and linger on the Mall
- more public restrooms open late (until midnight) - using old info buildings for police/ security substations along the mall - have dedicated police to cover Mall: we get to know police - they know community + problem makers & homeless
A green, eco-friendly, fun area to work & play. Use Mall to commute to work & more seating for lunches or hanging out, shade, etc.
A center promenade with more outdoor relaxation areas and places to eat under shade. Also the amount of kiosks only open a few hours a day makes the afternoon/ evenings look dull and empty. Perhaps a canopy that is interactive like the Freemont street in Las Vegas. Fun and engaging.
I'd like to see the treatment not stop at the 16th street ROW, but "spill over" into the cross-streets - even as far as the 14th street bike path + 19th st. Free Metro ride stations, subtle clues could help remind visitors, on, I'm near Curtis + Champa Sts versus I'm in LoDo or I'm at CCS. Would also like to see long-distance transit users stop at Mall destinations to buy coffee or whatever.
IMPROVEMENTS
> STOP PAYING 2 MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR TO REPLACE PAVERS; > REMOVE PAVERS - SOME TINTED CONCRETE (DIFFERENT COLORS) WITH PAVER LIKE IMPRINTS - GOVE AND TRAIN THOSE WHO WANT TO GET OFF THE STREETS - BRING THE THOUSANDS OF TRAILERS/ MODULARS FROM LOUISIANA (IF NECESSARY) TO PROVIDE TEMPORARY HOUSING - NO MORE PLANNING DISCUSSIONS - ACTION
More higher-end, local establishments. More diversity and opportunities to use the Mall as a gathering space that residents want to use
Fewer police. Those who are downtown take crime reports from variety class and black people.
Mall shuttles need to run more frequently at night and on the weekend. There are no public restrooms. Have somewhere for the homeless people, "urban travelers" to go hang out. Change public perception.
adding bikes 7 days a week and removing the Mall shuttles. Adding more kiosks and art to the Mall
A place that is uniquely Denver, that feels safe, and that contains a lot of vegetation.
Increased walking, lingering, and transit use. Increased movement between 16t St along the named streets (too much of the positive activity huddles only along 16th and the city's life ends up be far too "linear")