
Mud Island Land Use Study: Phase II Public Input Results

*Riverfront Development Corporation
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I. Executive Summary

A. Introduction

The public has been engaged beginning in March 2009, to provide ideas and guidance for a comprehensive land use study of Mud Island, with a focus on the area south of the AW Willis Bridge and past the new RiverTown residential development that includes vacant land around and beneath the I-40 bridge, a maintenance compound, parking lot, the former Belle Pavilion, and other areas of Mud Island River Park (MIRP). The input is being gathered in three different rounds, as follows.

1. Round I (March/April, 2009): Gathered a very broad range of possible ideas for improving MIRP from as diverse a group of stakeholders as possible; therefore, no constraints were placed on fiscal feasibility, physical limitations, or long-term sustainability. These issues will be considered in Round III.
2. Round II (May/June, 2009): Engaged citizens in designing possible land use scenarios using elements based on the first round of input as “building blocks”; gathered targeted stakeholder feedback to the series of proposed elements; and conducted an on-line survey to gage public interest in using various MIRP amenities and facilities. Aside from land use options, some limited input was gathered regarding fiscal constraints, physical limitations and long-term sustainability.
3. Round III (Fall, 2009): Gather citizen and targeted stakeholder feedback on several overall design scenarios for MIRP.

This report documents public input gathered during Round II. *Information on past and future public input activities can be found at the Riverfront Development Corporation’s (RDC) website: www.memphisriverfront.com.*

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B. Phase II Input Process Overview

A variety of methods were used to gather a broad range of public input, as shown here:

| Input Method | Purpose and Focus | # Participants |
|---|---|--|
| Public Meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Public responded to design concepts generated by LRK based on Round 1 citizen Input | 215 (est.) |
| On-Line Survey | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Gathered information on which mechanisms for increased access citizens would use while visiting MIRPGathered more detailed information regarding preferences for types of activities within each land use category | 556 |
| Targeted Focus Groups with different stakeholder sets | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Gathered stakeholder groups responses to design concepts generated by LRK based on Round 1 citizen inputIdentified critical elements for successIdentified barriers to success | 9 different meetings with 32 individual participants |

Additional unsolicited input was submitted by several members of the public via email and letters. This information was taken into consideration in the overall findings.

C. Key Findings

Public input from all sources revealed a high degree of consensus and support from a wide cross-section of stakeholders. In addition, specific issues were raised from the unique perspective of some stakeholder groups that have broad implications for the success of the ultimate solutions.

1. Across input methods, citizens of all ages enthusiastically support a mixed-use environment that is vibrant with people and activities. Consistent with input from Round I, people are united in their desire for a mix of 1) streetscape amenities (dining, shops, performing arts, public art); 2) recreation for people of all ages and abilities (walking/jogging trails, skating, biking, and playgrounds); and 3) natural areas for picnicking, viewing and botanical gardens.
 - A mixture of elements from all three categories was included in all of the land use concepts that were developed by public meeting participants.
 - The great majority (80% - 85%) of respondents to an on-line survey indicate they would use amenities in all three of these categories.

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- Input from homogenous stakeholder groups indicates that different groups prefer a slightly different emphasis among each of these three categories. While a few groups had a strong orientation to favor one category over the other, most groups were aligned in their desire for a balanced mix of amenities within each of the categories.
2. A large-scale skateboard park was a major element for consideration.
- Support for this element ranged from fervent advocacy to benign acceptance. Though skateboard users and advocates have been the most vocal supporters, other stakeholder groups enthusiastically support a “world class” skateboard park due to its perceived appeal in attracting young families and professionals, national events, and an underserved population of young fitness enthusiasts.
- Some stakeholders questioned whether the skateboard park was a “highest and best use” for MIRP. However, there was no opposition expressed to placing a skateboard park in the park.
- Though skateboard supporters had a majority presence in both the public meetings and on-line survey, these stakeholders also supported the use of a variety of other amenities, including streetscape and natural assets.
- While just more than half (53%) of survey respondents said they would use a skateboard park, many more of overall respondents (75% - 89%) would also take advantage of dining, musical performances, picnic areas, walking trails, improved pedestrian access, and extended hours. And, while all the land use scenarios included skateboard parks, they also included many of the amenities listed above.
- The remaining point of concern regarded the location of the skateboard park on MIRP.
3. Feasibility and sustainability were major themes.
- A range of stakeholders believe that MIRP development should be carefully considered within the context of other downtown and community amenities. Residents and visitors must perceive a unique appeal to visiting MIRP versus other downtown and overall community amenities.
 - It was advised that market feasibility be strongly factored, particularly relating to developing entertainment and retail.
 - Many stakeholders suggested that development should occur incrementally so that success can be proven before substantial additional investment.
 - Input indicates that participants favor revenues generated from taxes on new development.

II. Public Meeting Input Summary

A. Overview and Description

Public input meetings were promoted and held in downtown and east Memphis. They were advertised via multiple channels, including newspaper listings, listings in targeted e-letters (RDC, Center City Commission, Greater Memphis Chamber), and passed on via e-mail through a variety of stakeholders groups (neighborhood associations, civic organizations, Leadership Academy, etc.).

The meetings were held as follows:

| Area | Date | # Participants |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| East Memphis | May 12 | 125 (est.) |
| Downtown | May 14 | 90 (est.) |

Upon entry to each public meeting participants were randomly assigned to tables, with approximately 10 persons to a table. Looney Ricks and Kiss Architects (LRK) then presented five possibilities for combining various land use elements which had been proposed by the public during Round I. These possibilities were presented so that each table could choose one as a starting point for developing their own land use concept using the proposed elements as “building blocks”. Based on previous input, there were some uses/elements that LRK included in each of the possibilities, including:

- Greenbelt Park extension
- Welcoming entrance (north end)
- Trees
- Outlooks/overviews
- Benches
- Trails/paths
- Various mechanisms to improve access to the water (from adding boat slips to creating a “beachfront” or adding a plaza with steps down into the water)

These elements, as well as others that did not appear in all five, were organized into the following possible combinations according to overall themes:

1. *Revise and Refine*: Improved the existing uses and added some elements such as a skate park, connection to Greenbelt Park, playground, pedestrian bridge, and dog park.

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2. *Civic and Recreation*: Focused on more civic and recreation spaces, such as a plaza with an “iconic landmark,” enhancing and adding performance venues, quiet places for reflection, fountains, pool, and boardwalk/promenade.
3. *Cultural and Entertainment*: Focused on creating more opportunities for cultural experiences and entertainment options including museum expansion, an aquarium, a school, expanded amphitheater, and shopping/dining district.
4. *Entertainment (Mixed Use) Scheme*: A mid-way point between concepts 3 and 5, the focus was on expanding cultural experiences and entertainment options while adding an active street scene with uses such as restaurants, shopping, festival street market, amusement park, and splash/water park.
5. *Urban Concept*: Focused on an urban concept for MIRP, transforming it to be an extension of Downtown. It eliminated many current uses such as the museum, Mississippi Riverwalk Replica, amphitheatre, marina, Gulf of Mexico area, and boat ramps in favor of an active street scene plus residential, retail, and office space and a hotel. Additionally, this concept adds an additional vehicular bridge.

After these possibilities were presented, each table was asked to choose one that most closely reflected their table’s collective vision for MIRP in the future.

Following were the frequency of which various possibilities were chosen:

| “Starting Point” Scenario | Number of tables that chose as starting point |
|---|--|
| Concept # 1: <i>Revise and Refine</i> | 6 of 18 (3 added significant new elements while 3 retained minimal development approach) |
| Concept # 2: <i>Civic and Recreation</i> | 5 of 18 |
| Concept #3: <i>Cultural and Entertainment</i> | 3 of 18 |
| Concept #4: <i>Entertainment (Mixed Use) Scheme</i> | 2 of 18 |
| Concept #5: <i>Urban Concept</i> | 0 of 18 |
| Combination of concept 1 & 2 | 1 of 18 |
| Base map only – no proposed elements | 1 of 18 |

With the help of a designer and facilitator, each table started with the map of their chosen concept and altered the uses and the placements of uses until there was

general consensus at the table on a future vision for MIRP. Each table listed points of agreement and points of disagreement concerning their vision.

B. Summary of Findings from Public Meetings

Public meeting participants came up with many creative ways to envision MIRP during two public meetings, with a total of 18 different plans created by citizens working together at tables. No one plan matched another, but some general trends emerged:

- Similar to the public input results for Phase I, meeting participants favored a mix of uses/activities for MIRP satisfying a range of interests including recreation (skate park, walking/running trails, playgrounds, and splash parks), shopping, dining, cultural events (existing museum and performing arts) and musical venues (the amphitheatre and in new smaller venues).
- Again similar to results from Phase I, skate park advocates were well represented in both meetings, resulting in placement of a skate park(s) on every land use map in both public meetings. One table suggested two skate parks – one for beginners and one for more experience skaters.
 - Locations of the skate park(s) included the South tip and under the interstate bridge. Additionally, one table stated flexibility in placement of the skate park.
 - A snake run was planned by 3 of the 18 of the tables.
- Much of the heavier development (mixed use areas and boardwalks with shopping and dining) was placed on the East side of MIRP (7 of 18 tables).
- While the West side of MIRP was generally reserved for walking/running/biking trails and nature viewing areas, some mixed use areas and boardwalks were planned in that area on the North end (5 of 18 tables).
- Participants again showed their strong desire to be close to the water by 15 of the 18 tables planning at least one of those options (pier, boardwalk, public boating access, steps down to the water).
- Recreation was another common emphasis, with skate parks on all of the tables' plans, splash parks on 13 of 18 plans, playgrounds on 9 of 18 plans, extension of Green Belt Park on 7 of 18 plans, other running/walking/biking trails on 4 of 18 plans, and fishing areas on 5 of 18 plans.
- Half of all tables planned some type of civic space (fountains, sculptures, plazas, formal gardens), with 4 out of 18 specifically mentioning public art.
- The size of areas planned for shopping and dining or concessions varied, with 15 out of 18 tables agreeing that these uses are desirable for MIRP.
 - Half of all tables planned significant space, more than just a few shops or outdoor cafes, for retail and dining.

- Some tables (4 out of 18) planned no construction for these uses, only allowing for “vendors under tents” or “open-air food venues.”
- Many tables specifically mentioned retention of major elements existing in MIRP – 10 out of 18 retained or expanded or altered the amphitheatre; 7 out of 18 retained or expanded the Mississippi River Museum; and 6 out of 18 retained the Mississippi River Walk Replica.
- Most tables expressed concern over sufficient access to MIRP with all but one planning for either a pedestrian bridge (12 out of 18), a water taxi (6 out of 18), or an additional vehicular bridge (one out of 18).
- Some tables (8 out of 18) specifically mentioned “greening” MIRP in a variety of ways such as adding shade trees, grass, and native vegetation and replacing the amphitheatre seats with grass seating (6 out of 18).
- Only one table planned for a hotel and only one table planned for residential land use.
- Land uses/specifications not mentioned above that emerged more than once were:
 - Historic Carousel, 8 out of 18
 - Aquarium, 5 out of 18
 - Smaller musical venues, 5 out of 18
 - Dog park, 3 out of 18
 - School, 3 out of 18
 - Extended hours of operation, 3 out of 18
 - No parking in MIRP, 3 out of 18

III. On-Line Survey Findings Summary

A. Description of Respondents

556 respondents completed some portion of the Phase II Public Input Survey. The completion rate was 95.9% with 533 respondents continuing through the entire survey.

- More than half of the respondents were between 18 – 40 years of age (58.5%); 28% were between the ages of 41 – 60.
- The large majority of respondents live in Memphis (71.9%). Respondents living in Memphis primarily lived in Midtown (40.4%) and Downtown (28.5%).
- The vast majority of respondents identified as Caucasian (87.3%), with 7.8% reporting as African-American.

- Many respondents were married with children (35.7%), but the next largest categories were single with no children (31.8%) and married with no children (22.1%).

B. Major Themes

Overall themes include the following, with specifics listed below according to use category:

- Across all survey activities or design elements, the most highly desired were live music, other performing arts, and dining.
- Additional access to MIRP is favored by the vast majority of respondents with popular mechanisms varying but including the existing monorail bridge, a new pedestrian bridge, water taxi, the extension of Greenbelt Park, and enhanced vehicular access.
- Low impact uses such as picnics and exercise trails were the most popular recreation activities.
- Live music was the most desired entertainment activity with other performing arts, dining, and shopping close behind.
- Placement of civic and green space was highly desired, specifically botanic gardens, shade trees, an extension of Greenbelt Park, and seating and natural view areas.
- An aquarium, art galleries, and the existing Mississippi River Museum were the most highly favored cultural venues.
- Weather conditions such as extremely high temperatures and precipitation would prevent visitors from coming to MIRP.
- Most people desired to visit MIRP during daytime hours on the weekends and after 5 pm on the weekends and week days.
- The vast majority favor financing improvements of MIRP with revenues generated from leasing space to private individuals/companies and by taxes generated by new development in MIRP.

Concerning issues of access:

- Use of the existing monorail bridge was the most popular access mechanism with 81.1% being very or somewhat likely to utilize it.
- More than three fourths of respondents (77.8%) reported being very or somewhat likely to use a new pedestrian bridge to access MIRP.

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- Similarly, 74.9% reported being very or somewhat likely to access MIRP by an extension of Greenbelt Park and 71.2% by enhanced vehicular access from AC Willis Bridge.
- Use of a water ferry/taxi was very or somewhat likely for 56.8% of respondents.
- Less than half (48.2%) were very or somewhat likely to use a new vehicular bridge.

Concerning recreational activities:

- Picnics (85.1%) and exercise trails (79%) had the highest percentages of respondents reporting that they were very or somewhat likely to utilize those recreational elements.
 - Walking was the most commonly desired activity for the exercise trails (81.1%) with biking the next most desired (63.6%). Respondents also desired shade (84.6%), lookout/nature viewing areas (80.5%), and benches (80.5%).
- Playgrounds were next most desired recreational use (58%).
 - More than half of respondents (60.3%) desired adventure sports elements (such as zip lines and rock walls), climbable sculptures (54.6%), and mazes (54.2%).
- More than half of respondents (53.7%) reported being very or somewhat likely to utilize a skate park.
 - Additionally, when the survey specifically asked respondents about how they would use a skate park 45.9% reported that they would use the spectator area of a skate park in MIRP; 34.6% reported that they aren't interested in a skate park in MIRP.
- Just over half of respondents (50.1%) reported they would use a splash park; 27.5% were not interested in water activities at all in MIRP.
- For boating activities, 52.8% said they wanted to rent canoes and 48% kayaks.

Concerning entertainment:

- Most respondents (94.6%) reported being very or somewhat likely to participate in live music while at MIRP with 86.5% desiring live music in the amphitheatre and 75.8% desiring live music in small concert areas.

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- Also popular were other performing arts (89.7% very or somewhat likely), dining (88.4% very or somewhat likely), and shopping/market place (76.8% very or somewhat likely) were particularly popular.
 - For dining, 84% wanted to dine with a view of the Mississippi River and 67.9% with a view of Downtown/Wolf River Harbor. Nearly 80% wanted to eat locally authentic (no national chain restaurants) food.
 - For shopping, 74.9% desired to shop for local arts/crafts/food.
- Also particularly popular were outdoor movies (70%) and drama (e.g. Shakespeare in the Park with 60.7%).
- None of the amusement park options were favored by a majority of respondents with 44.3% reporting that they would use a water park and 43.1% a carousel.
- Most respondents (75.1%) were in favor of simply walking along the Mississippi River Walk Replica, while some desired to dine (56.6%) along side of it, splash in it (54%), and learn more about river history near it (51.2%).

Concerning use of *civic and green spaces*:

- More than three fourths of the respondents reported being very or somewhat likely to use all options for civic and green spaces except one (67.6% for native vegetation areas).
- Botanic gardens were particularly popular with 84% reporting they would be very or somewhat likely to use such gardens.
- 82.2% reported being very or somewhat likely to use both the Greenbelt Park Extension and seating and natural view areas.
- Shade was again highly desired (85.8%).
- Many respondents favored the inclusion of public art with 67.2% desiring spaces for temporary public art displays/activities.

Concerning *cultural venues*:

- Aquarium was the most popular option with 84.4% reporting that they would be very or somewhat likely to use such a venue.
 - None of the options for specific attributes of an aquarium were favored by the majority, with a focus on a wide variety of aquatic life the most popular content option (49.7%) and interaction with aquatic animals second (45.5%).
- Also popular were art galleries (77.7%) and the existing Mississippi River Museum (70.8%).

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- None of the options for specific enhancements for the Mississippi River Museum were favored by a majority, with 47.9% desiring updated museum content and 47.3% in favor of the inclusion of rotating or traveling exhibits.

Concerning the visiting times/conditions:

- Weather conditions would prevent respondents from visiting MIRP with 71.2% reporting that precipitation would stop attendance and 55.4% reporting that temperatures above 100 degrees would stop attendance.
- The vast majority of respondents (92.5%) reported that they would visit MIRP from 9 am – 5 pm during the weekends. But 75.8% reported that they would visit after 5 pm on the weekends and 67.9% would visit after 5 pm on a week day.

Concerning the financing:

- The vast majority of respondents (82.6%) favored financing improvements in MIRP with revenues generated from leasing space to private individuals/companies. Financing by taxes generated from new development in MIRP was favored by 71.9%.

Concerning open ended, non guided comments:

- Comments were varied, but several comments were repeated by many respondents:
 - Many respondents took the opportunity to again express their desire for a skate park.
 - Many favored including a dog park.
 - Many mentioned things related to observation/knowledge of historic events, for example placing historic markers and monuments.
 - Other comments have been submitted in writing outside of the parameters of the on-line survey. This input has been added and accounted for in the appropriate areas.

IV. Stakeholder Meetings

A. Stakeholder Focus Group Description

Small focus groups were held with sets of targeted MIRP stakeholders. These groups, listed below, were identified as stakeholder groups that warranted more in-depth conversations due to their close physical proximity to MIRP and/or symbiotic relationships of organizational goals with MIRP.

- Center City Commission, Memphis Convention & Visitor's Bureau, Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce
- Memphis Yacht Club
- City of Memphis Park Services Division
- Downtown Developers
- Skate Life of Memphis
- Users of the River (Wolf River Conservancy, Outdoors Inc., Sierra Club, Canoe Clubs, Mississippi River Corridor - TN)
- Young Community Leaders (*Mpact Memphis, Leadership Academy, Leadership Memphis*)
- Friends for Our Riverfront
- Downtown Neighborhood Associations (*Downtown Neighborhood Association, South Main Association, Island View Homeowners, Harbor Town Homeowners Association*)

B. Overview of Findings

1. Common Themes and Trends

Insights and perceptions that were relatively common among the diverse groups include the following:

- Several groups emphasized the need for carefully planned phasing of the plan implementation. Participants stated that developing several phases for implementation, as opposed to implementing the final plan in one phase, could help with project financing and audience-building by creating a sense of excitement though continuously adding activities and elements.
- Although groups differed on appropriate activities and uses for MIRP, all agreed that authenticity and uniqueness are highly valued and that the unique qualities of MIRP should be retained and built upon. Participants asserted that MIRP will find its success by leveraging its unique attributes to provide a visitor experience that no other public space offers.
- Several groups expressed a strong desire for MIRP not to duplicate but instead to complement other attractions in Downtown. Some groups took this a step further urging plans for MIRP to be made in concert with and to be complimentary of other public spaces in our community, for example the Fairgrounds and Shelby Farms.

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- The planned aquarium in the proposed Bass Pro Shop was given as an example, as an aquarium was shown on several concepts during Phase II for MIRP.
- While groups expressed a desire for connectivity and compatibility with Downtown (though with varying degrees), all groups rejected the land use possibility which would develop MIRP with the same or similar urban density as Downtown. Groups expressed various reasons for this viewpoint:
 - The Young Community Leaders group felt this use would create exclusivity, stating that such an environment would only be accessible to people with discretionary income.
 - The Users of the River and Friends for Our Riverfront groups strongly prefer that MIRP maintain an environment where the focus is on the River and other natural amenities.
 - The Downtown Developers group was concerned about the feasibility of Concept 5 particularly about whether MIRP could attract the critical mass needed to support the retail and dining shown and the expense of such structures (stating that to build to 4 stories on MIRP requires extra infrastructure).
- Groups agreed that the south tip of MIRP is a visual focal point and that any element placed on it should therefore be treated as a landmark and be iconic and of high quality.
- Support for a skate park on MIRP ranged from fervent advocacy to benign acceptance, but there was no out right opposition. Advocates stated that a skate park would serve the recreation needs of a large group and bring local and international spectators of the sport to MIRP. While not acting as detractors, other groups speculated that other locations in the community may be more suitable. There were conflicting opinions regarding the appropriate placement of the skate park on MIRP.
- Many groups commented that the visual appearance of the structures in MIRP need aesthetic improvement, that their facades are outdated and have an institutional feel.
- While many groups desired food and some retail (particularly locally authentic experiences), there was concern among many about the lack of a market for these activities. This was particularly true among people who have direct experiences with Downtown - those who live in, work in, or develop Downtown.

2. Points of Differentiation among Stakeholder Groups

The different perspectives of the various stakeholder groups reveal conflicts between certain groups and/or sub themes specific to certain interest areas:

- Sustainability was particularly important, although it was voiced in different ways. For example some groups stated the importance of making strategic choices for MIRP's infrastructure now, building a foundation that can last for many years; while other groups stated the importance of using the existing infrastructure so as not to create debt for MIRP.
- The Young Leaders group was in favor of a bold plan for MIRP - one that entails strategic changes with noticeable enhancements, while the Friends for Our Riverfront and the Users of the River focused on utilizing MIRP's existing infrastructure and making changes that are more about programming and leasing space.
- While other groups were interested in implementing a wide variety of forms of entertainment and activities in MIRP, the Friends for Our Riverfront and the Users of the River highlighted the importance of focusing on the natural environment and relating activities because of the belief that its river proximity and beautiful natural environment is MIRP's biggest asset.
- While all groups favored increased physical access to MIRP, some favored an additional pedestrian bridge while others favored lower impact connections like the Greenbelt Park and water taxis. No groups expressed opposition to the extension of Greenbelt Park.
 - Some groups saw the need for a pedestrian bridge in order to provide extended access hours (whereas water taxis might operate during limited hours) and/or to provide exercisers with a continuous path, so as not to halt exercise while waiting on a ferry.
 - Other groups saw an additional pedestrian bridge as unnecessary due to one or more of the following reasons - the existing Monorail Bridge was seen as adequate; an additional bridge was seen as a potential eyesore; a pedestrian bridge was seen as a potential barrier to River traffic.
- While no group expressed opposition for a skate park, some stated that a location on the south end would be inappropriate while Skate Life expressed significant reservation about a location under the interstate bridge instead desiring the south end location.
 - As mentioned above, most groups see the south end as the visual focal point of MIRP therefore desire a landmark or iconic element to mark the tip. Many did not view a skate park as an appropriate

landmark. However, some representatives from young leadership groups expressed the viewpoint that a well-designed, attractive skate park with lots of on-going activity would provide an appealing visual statement.

- Skate Life asserted that the alternate proposed location, under the interstate bridge, is inappropriate primarily due to safety concerns - there would be less of an opportunity to control access to the skate park and bird droppings from roosting birds above and possible debris coming off of interstate would create skating hazards.
- Everyone agreed that the availability of parking was a critical issue. But some feel that, with enhanced access to MIRP, existing Downtown parking would be sufficient, while others feel that people will not visit MIRP unless parking is in very close proximity to the entrance.
- Skate Life was interested in specific desired elements to the proposed skate park (such as a snake run), whereas specific elements of a skate park were not a topic of discussion in other groups.
- The Yacht Club was interested upgrades and access to the Marina, whereas the Marina was not a topic of discussion in most other groups.

C. Key Findings from Each Stakeholder Group

1. Center City Commission, Memphis Convention & Visitor's Bureau, Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce

- It is important to coordinate MIRP with the rest of downtown, especially the planned Front Street promenade, so that attractions are complementary to each other and distinctive, rather than redundant or competing.
- Changes to the park should be phased in over time, for many reasons:
 - If carefully planned, phasing in will maximize interest and sustainability for a longer period as well as alleviating financial burdens.
 - The cost of renovating MIRP may actually require phasing, so we should embrace it as a strategy not just of finance, but of interest as well.
 - The phase-in process should be intentionally marketed so as to create ongoing excitement each year about new enhancements and give people a reason to return.
 - Phasing also makes sense in that we don't yet know how the promenade will be developed. We don't want to duplicate amenities:

it's much easier to walk across Front Street and eat than to catch a water taxi to the island.

- We should see the MIRP's growth as the growth of a neighborhood—it has to be organic. It has a different character than if you are trying to create one large thing, which will be only one big, artificial thing.
- The bones and structure of MIRP should be developed so that it can be expanded and reinvented from time to time to sustain interest and viability.
- MIRP should be authentic to the city.
- Existing and potential access to MIRP, in all its possible forms, needs to be examined.

2. Memphis Yacht Club

- The availability and accessibility of boat ramps for launching is one of the most important elements of a successful and popular marina.
- Parking needs to be in close proximity to the marina, both for boaters with slips as well as recreational, casual boaters who bring their own cars or trucks with trailers.
- Any MIRP plan must preserve the right-of-way for boats in the Wolf River Harbor with any vehicle or pedestrian bridge to connect MIRP to the mainland.
- It is important to preserve the community feel of the MIRP marina. (All successful marinas have this fraternity-like feeling.) If the marina were spread out horizontal, this feel would be lost because people would lose proximity to each other.
- Yacht Club members would like to see more covered slips in the marina.
- The marina should not become an extension of downtown. It is a distinct amenity: a getaway that is close to downtown.

3. City of Memphis Park Services Division

- For these stakeholders, payment for MIRP's renovation and upkeep is a central concern.
- Accessibility to MIRP is also a concern with this group.
- Whatever attractions are added to MIRP should be unique to Memphis.
- Marketing and promotion should be integral to the plan.

4. Downtown Developers

- These developers see the MIRP's southern tip as its iconic point, and as such, it should be treated as a landmark. That area deserves careful consideration, as it is important visually to the rest of downtown—fairground rides, a skate park, and other amusements are inappropriate treatments.
- Overbuilding, i.e., whether or not MIRP will have the critical mass needed to support retail and dining in these structures, was a concern for this group.

5. Skate Life of Memphis

- These stakeholders assert that the skate park doesn't need the island—the island needs the skate park.
- A skate park is a force multiplier opportunity to catapult the city, intersecting economics, creative class, tourism, quality of life, etc., and is synergistic with ongoing efforts to make our city great.
- The unique situation and geography of MIRP provide an opportunity to build a best-in-class, 80,000 square foot skate park that would attract tourists worldwide, as well as national tours with economic impact equivalent to that of a large annual convention.
- From this group's perspective, the most desirable location for the skate park would be the southern tip of MIRP; least desirable is under the I-40 bridge.
- Controlled access is the key to maintaining the overall condition and order of the skate park.

6. Users of the River

- Sustainability—i.e., maximum long-term, habitual use of the MIRP with minimal impact to the environment—is the key to gaining these stakeholders' support.
- Generally speaking, the group believes that development efforts are “good” to the extent that they make MIRP a family-friendly, free-of-charge destination for Memphis's resident population and keep the focus on the river and natural environment as amenities in their own right. Likewise, development efforts are “bad” to the extent that they extend Downtown Memphis onto MIRP in the form of residential and commercial towers.
- These participants want to realize the final plan with a reduce/reuse/recycle approach to existing infrastructure: “don't reinvent

the wheel.” This would require lower capital inputs on the front end—furthering the goal of sustainability by heightening the chances of the park’s continued solvency.

- These participants agreed that the island’s southern tip is the public face of the park. It faces downtown and will be visible from many offices and residences. An appropriate iconic marker, accompanied by attractive, tasteful amenities will keep the park inviting.
- Following the above: there was no objection to the inclusion of thrill rides, a Ferris wheel, Zippin Pippin, or a skate park, but all participants believe these should be somewhere other than the southern tip. The group noted that such low-quality structures could become eyesores in time.

7. Young Community Leaders

- These stakeholders see Memphis as competing with peer cities for talent, tourism, reputation, and public image.
- While the members of this group disagreed over some details, all wanted to see the MIRP project make a bold statement that would attract national attention; portray Memphis as a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive community; and attract the young, talented, highly educated workers often referred to as the “creative class.”
- In general, these young urban professionals feel that because the city gets only the rare opportunity to revisit this space—once every thirty years, at the current rate—it’s important that the changes be extensive and highly visible.
- All participants were strongly in favor of a pedestrian/bike bridge linking MIRP with downtown, preferably at a point close to Beale Street. Comment: “Tourists walk to the end of Beale Street and stop and wonder what that [MIRP] is, but they can’t get there.” Another comment: “A water taxi will be okay while I’m waiting on [the construction of] my pedestrian bridge.”

8. Friends for Our Riverfront

- FFOR were very clear about their desires for MIRP—even submitting them in writing (transcribed here verbatim):
 - Minimal (if any) taxation to implement new projects.
 - Utilize existing infrastructure for expense control by reopening, refreshing, leasing restaurants, shops, etc. One idea along this line was for a “cool” retail restaurant/club showcasing a rotating roster.

- Expense control also by better management with increased concerts and activities, but no big ticket additions.
 - Better access by keeping park open later and in cooler weather. Also consider a water taxi rather than an expensive pedestrian bridge and allowing walkers, joggers, and bikers to use the current walking level of the monorail year-round.
 - More recreational activities to complement such ongoing programs as camping and canoe rental. Examples:
 - Involve Bill Dance in creating various fishing programs to get people onto the island.
 - A “river-themed” playground with Tom Sawyer/Huck Finn treehouses, rafts, etc.
 - The one capital expense that many seemed willing to support was a skate park, and the comments we heard preferred that it be built under the Interstate.
 - For these stakeholders, ideas are “bad” to the extent that they cost taxpayer money and miss the point of the river as an amenity in itself. Ideas are “good” to the extent that they first make the current park as good as it can be, then develop in concert with other proposed riverfront projects to avoid duplication of amenities and create a unified riverfront.
 - For additional access from the mainland, water taxi (including as many as six stops) is strongly preferred to a pedestrian bridge, which is seen as too costly.
9. Downtown Neighborhood Associations (Harbor Town resident reps, South Main resident reps)
- This group was greatly concerned with sustainability and advised that funds be spent based on research that indicates a relatively low risk. Development should be conducted slowly and incrementally to ensure that whatever is done effectively attracts visitors. The group believes that “doing nothing is better than another failure.”
 - Plan #2: Civic and Public Spaces was the consensus favorite among participants due to defined park areas, extended walking areas, and connectivity on the north and south which would tie downtown together. Another attractive attribute was minimal “tear-down” costs.
 - Participants believed that limited residential development within MIRR would be desirable in order to help support and activate the streetscape, though they were not sure on how to define the scope of desirable

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development. They believe that connectivity to Harbor Town would also help activate the streetscape.

- They favored the skate park because it would give the skate community a place to do it legally. However, they were not sure whether the local skate community would be large enough to support a large park.
- A dog park would be greatly favored by downtown residents, as there is no such space currently available for the many downtown dog owners.
- The group believes that creating a mixed use amenity with many recreational opportunities can be an important contributor to bolstering South Main's appeal as an arts district attractive to future young resident