

## 2 - ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES



This chapter provides a summary of planning issues and opportunities that were identified at various public meetings. Also included are the results of a Visual Preference Survey that was conducted at the beginning of the planning process to gain insight on the types of developments desired in League City.

### The Bottom Line

#### DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

League City has grown from a farming and ranching town into a bedroom community comprised largely of single family homes in modern subdivisions with complementary apartment complexes, strip commercial retail and retail “power centers”. On their own, most of the subdivisions in the community offer an attractive, highly accessible and convenient lifestyle. However, this same series of development patterns has a tendency to create many of the problems that are currently being experienced in League City. Stormwater damage is, in some part, the result of historic decisions to allow development to occur within flood-prone areas. Increased cost of providing infrastructure and services, as well as difficulty in attracting major commercial retail activity, is partially attributable to decisions to allow sprawling, low density development.

#### FAILURE OF TRANSPORTATION AND STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE TO KEEP PACE

Many residents (and some developers) acknowledge that the City of League City grew at a pace that was difficult to maintain and support. Perhaps most obvious to residents and visitors were the growing mobility issues. Limited transportation alternatives, connectivity and capacity are, in large part, the result of poor planning and failure to follow the master thoroughfare plan. They are also the result of the fact that the majority of major roadways within League City are outside of municipal control. Stormwater follows a similar pattern to transportation in regards to increasing issues as limited facilities attempt to meet rising demand.

#### INADEQUATE WATER CAPACITY

Unlike transportation, water infrastructure delivers a limited commodity. More, water is a shared resource that all growing communities are seeking to acquire. Recent events have proven that water pressure and capacity are critical issues, even without growth. While community leaders make every effort to acquire additional capacity, it appears increasingly unlikely that League City can or should continue to support current water consumption practices or development patterns that do not incorporate techniques to conserve water.

### LACK OF COMMON FOCUS, SENSE OF IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

A major problem that is typical of bedroom communities is a pattern of growth that results in homogenous development with few distinctive features, landmarks, attractions or overall sense of community identity. As a result, residents are as likely to associate with a particular subdivision as they are to the community. More, bedroom communities tend to be relatively transient. As a result, residents often find it difficult to feel a sense of investment beyond personal property. League City has particularly struggled to establish a unique identity around which to build a common focus - a fact that is evident in all aspects of the community ranging from lack of a strong economic development focus to lack of attractive gateways properly welcoming guests.

### MISSING GREAT PLACES

League City has a number of local attractions, including parks, museums, a resort and marina, and a growing commercial center; however, the community lacks any attractions or destinations sufficient to be a regular draw to local residents or guests. This is, in part, a direct result of the inability to establish a strong brand around which to focus attractions or events. However, it also reflects a hesitancy by local leadership to fully commit to investing resources to build destinations. Private investment has equally failed to in efforts to create places unique to League City. No retail location has incorporated the features needed to establish a destination with the attractions or features needed to draw residents or visitors on a regular basis and in preference to competing centers. Similarly, results from a visual preference survey confirm that residents living in League City would prefer to see a wider variety of development options, including efforts to better incorporate League City’s natural assets.

### RETAIL AND EMPLOYMENT LEAKAGE

Another unfortunate trait common among bedroom communities is a substantial exodus of residents traveling outside of the community to work, shop or recreate. Substantial outmigration plays a substantial role in traffic congestion, the ability to spur economic development or positively impact local revenue streams. League City offers relatively few opportunities for employment, shopping or entertainment, despite the fact that the community is now the largest in Galveston County. The lack of employment and shopping centers, as well as attractions or events to draw people to the area relates directly to the need to establish “places”. It also speaks to the lack of common focus or a unique community identity.

## Stated Issues and Opportunities

### MOBILITY

- Traffic Congestion
- 5-points
- I-45/FM 518 intersection area (east & west)
- 518 in Historic District
- Intersection improvements: FM 646 & I-45, FM 270 & Webster Street, LC Pkway & I-45, I-45 & 518, 518 & Palamino, I-45 & SH 96
- Lack of sufficient east-west thoroughfares
- Too many school zones
- Insufficient north/south routes over Clear Lake/Clear Creek
- Traffic near the high school, need to coordinate school times with traffic flow
- 518 westbound at 2094, center lane backs up in morning and blocks left lane
- Streets need to be maintained (Houston, Hewitt, East Main, Texas, Galveston, Louisiana)
- Difficulty in navigating through the city
- Lack of connectivity
- Slow down traffic in neighborhoods
- Cut through traffic
- Make community more pedestrian friendly/walkable
- Need sidewalks along Main Street, Newport, along SH 96, Davis Road, around Clear Creek Intermediate, Palamino
- Need sidewalks in the vicinity of schools
- Need for dedicated bike lanes on streets, not just bike trails
- Need pedestrian and bike paths along FM 270 between FM 518 and FM 528 (NASA Rd 1)
- Limited access across railroad tracks
- Trucks on FM 518
- Light synchronization throughout city
- There is a need for a north-south route
- Lack of public transit options including pedestrian facilities and amenities
- Not enough ways to access I-45

- Too many left turn opportunities
- Central train station for commuter rail/mass transit
- Need for more handicap spaces
- Hurricane evacuation

### INFRASTRUCTURE

- Growth has outpaced infrastructure (traffic, water, wastewater)
- Lack of infrastructure in Shellside (drainage, water, wastewater)
- Repetitive flooding (Clear Creek Village, Glen Cove, Shellside, N.E. of Third St. Oaks of Clear Creek, Mary Lane)
- Storm Water–Lack of regional detention, maintenance of drainage ditches and culverts, and lack of long term planning
- Centralized detention on SW side
- Wastewater – cost of large scale improvements to plants, lack of capacity for new developments, and lack of capacity for redevelopment
- No wastewater on SW side
- Water – summer shortages, lack of capacity for new developments, and lack of capacity for redevelopment

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- More retail and office (near Sedona and Brittany Lakes, along SH 96, west side of town)
- Lack of resources to attract office and retail
- Need for aggressive economic tools
- Lack of strong focused marketing theme or effort
- No identity, sense of place
- Lack of cohesiveness in the city
- Need shopping, dining, entertainment (more chain restaurants, fine dining, movie theatre, cultural activities, amphitheater, cultural festivals, farmers market)
- Entertainment options for all demographics
- One stop shopping
- Build stronger tax base by being less dependent on residences and more dependent on commercial
- Need more housing options. Add density where appropriate

## PARKS/OPEN SPACE

- Need more trails, open space, parks
- Take advantage of Clear Creek and Clear Lake
- Preserve trees, particularly “Butler Oaks” and other large (non-invasive) trees
- Preserve green spaces, including natural prairie lands
- Preserve floodplain and wetlands
- Joint use of recreation facilities
- Indoor pool
- Dog Park

## AESTHETICS

- More attractive signs, eliminate visual clutter
- Additional trees, landscaping along roadways
- Landscaping around buildings
- Enforce codes
- Screen parking lots and buildings with shrubs, trees and other landscaping

## GROWTH

- Diversify the tax base
- Too many apartments
- Manage new growth
- Protect existing neighborhoods
- Mixed use developments
- Need a new library
- Neighborhood services in walking distance
- Stricter guidelines for developers

## MAIN STREET

- Remove abandoned buildings
- Create architectural standards
- Reduce visual clutter
- Wide sidewalks and bike trails along Main Street
- Lack of parking, parking standards inappropriate to character of area, particularly historic district
- Bury utility lines

- Fill in ditches in Historic District with drainage and sidewalks
- Protect character of historic district, including roads and ditches
- New water lines
- Trim oaks (overhang & power cables)
- Cross access between properties
- Prohibit left turns from Main Street in places with no center turn lane
- Limit bottlenecks and speed zones
- Limit large truck traffic along Main Street
- Limit traffic from Wisconsin to Coryell
- Slow traffic along Main Street
- Sync the traffic lights
- Create new routes around Main Street to preserve as is
- Encourage through-traffic to use Route 96 to get to Kemah
- Need stop sign at the intersection of Coryell and Wisconsin
- Beautification efforts
- Non-invasive access to Clear Creek

## Visual Preference Survey

During the month of February the City conducted a visual preference survey as a way to solicit input from the public on development alternatives. Participants were asked to indicate their preference for a series of images on a scale of -2 to +2. The survey was posted on-line and distributed at a community meeting on February 25th. A total of 165 surveys were completed. The results were summarized and evaluated based on three figures: the total score each image received, the mean/average score and the mode. Looking at all three numbers gives you a more accurate and complete look at the results. The total score shows which image ranked the highest and lowest, the mean/average score provides an overall preference of the image and the mode identifies the ranking (-2, -1, 0, 1, 2) most often chosen.

### OVERALL RESULTS:

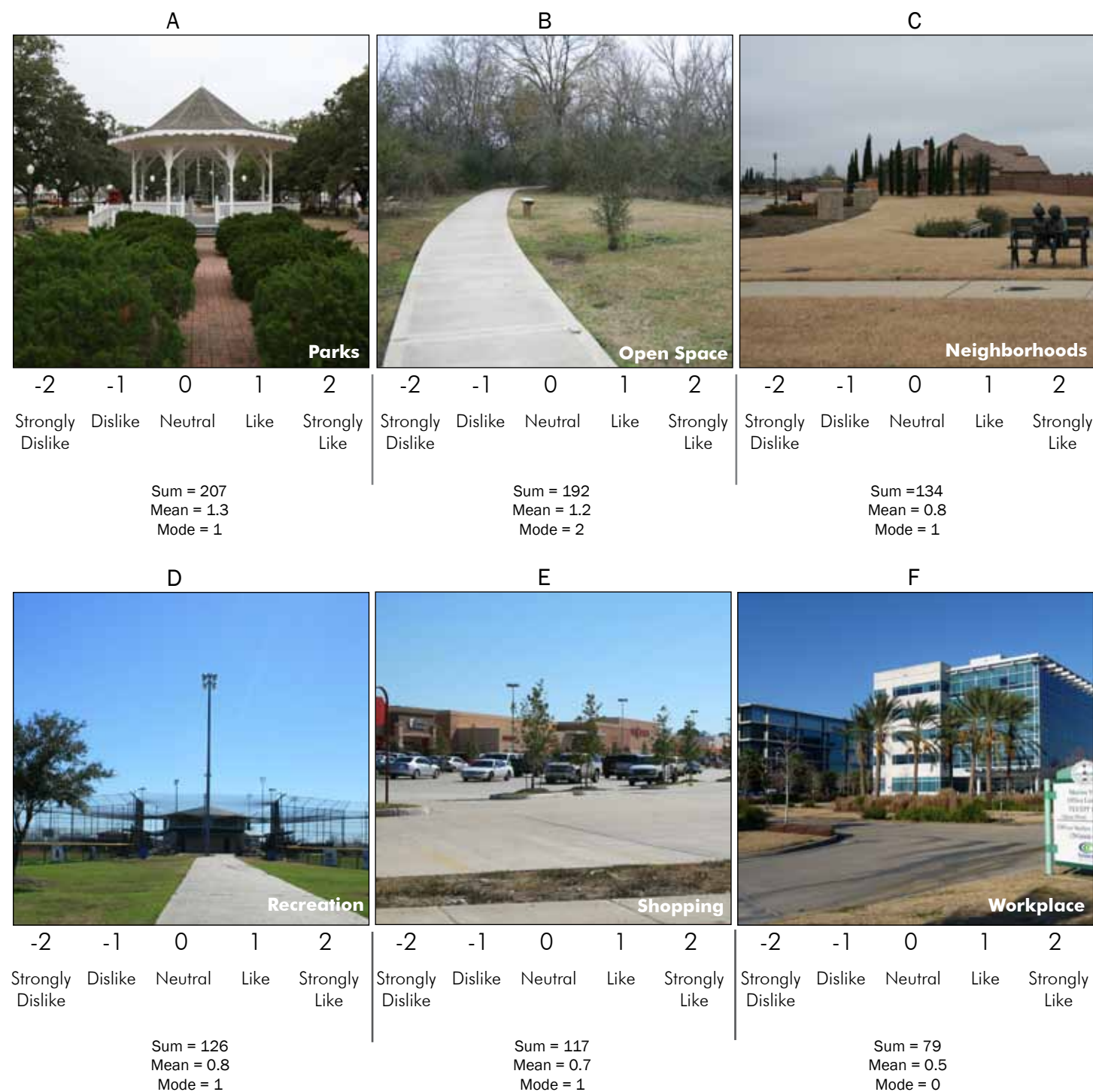
- There is a clear preference for “suburban” development for residential, commercial and office uses.
- There is a clear dislike for “auto dominant” development for residential, commercial and office uses.
- Valued amenities include open space/natural areas, parks and walkability.
- Strong desire for more community parks/greens, cafes and plazas.

- Almost half of the respondents favored mixed use developments.
- Almost half of the respondents favored townhomes, lofts and mixed use developments as options for multi-family developments.

Results for each individual question are shown on the following pages.



1. Rank what you like most about living in League City?



All images were ranked favorably with images A (Parks), and B (Open Space) ranked the highest followed by images C (Neighborhoods), D (Recreation) and E (Shopping).

2. There are a number of options for how single family residential housing and neighborhoods can be developed. Evaluate the following examples and indicate what you find appealing.



Images A (Rural), B (Estate), C (Suburban) and E (Traditional) were all ranked favorably. Image D (Auto Dominant) was ranked negatively. The majority of respondents ranked image F (Urban) negatively, however a large number also ranked it favorably, placing it in the neutral range.

3. There are a number of options for how multi-family residential housing and neighborhoods can be developed. Evaluate the following examples and indicate what you find appealing.

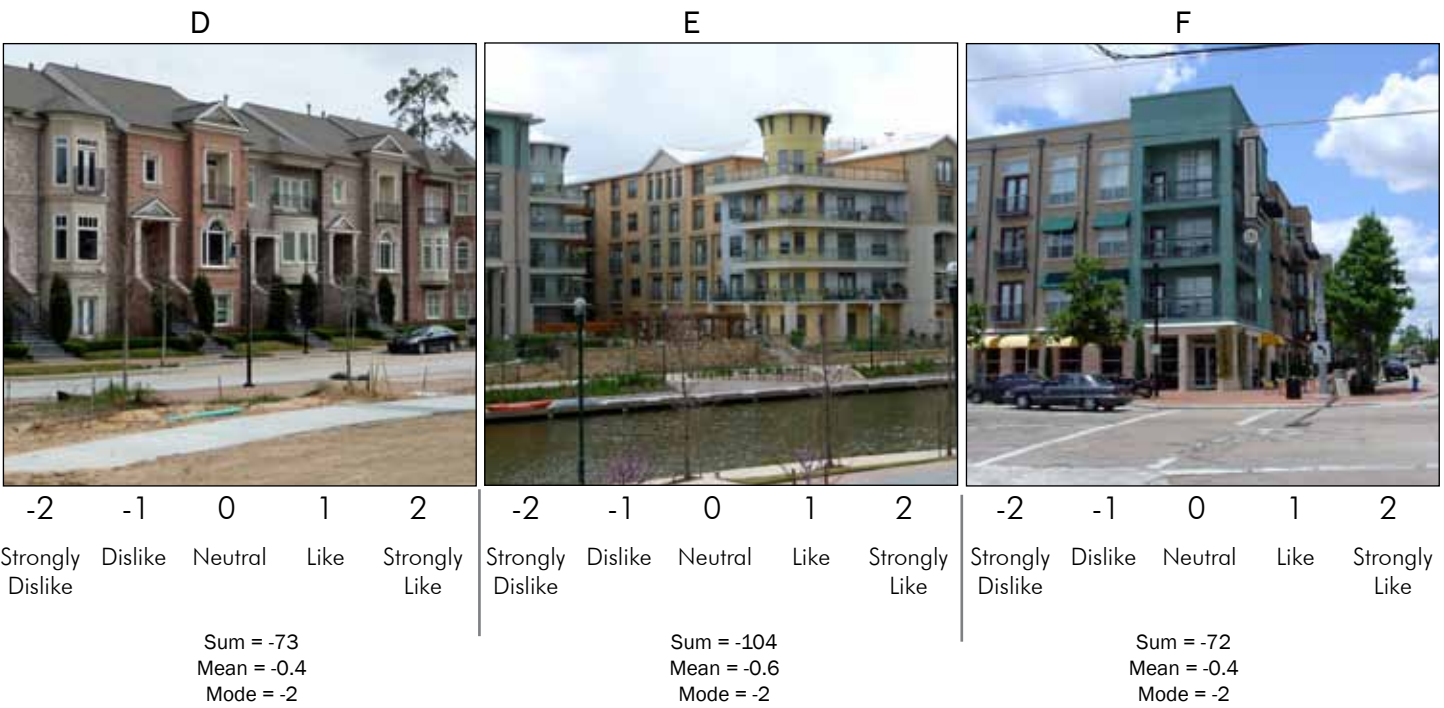


Image A (Suburban) was ranked favorably. Images C and E (Auto-Dominant Apartments) were ranked negatively. The majority of respondents ranked images D (Townhomes) and F (Mixed Use) negatively, however a large number of respondents also ranked the images favorably placing them in the neutral range.

4. Different families have different needs. What housing types would you like to see in League City other than single family homes?

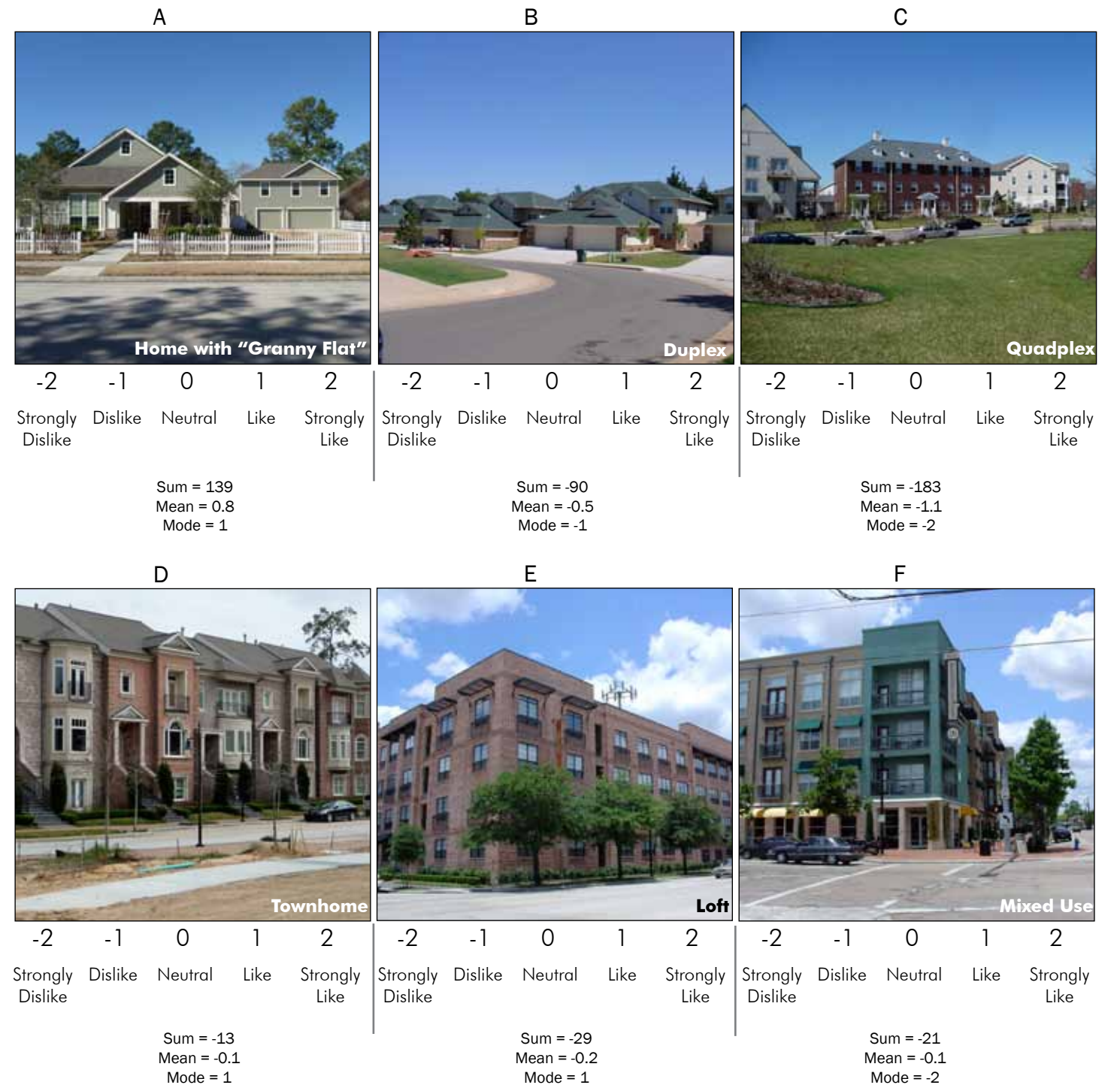


Image A (Home with "Granny Flat") was the clear favorite. Images B (Duplex) and C (Quadplex) were ranked negatively. Images D (Townhome), E (Loft), and F (Mixed Use) were placed in the neutral range with almost an even split between those respondents that disliked and liked the image.

5. Evaluate the following amenities you value in a neighborhood.



All images were ranked favorably with images B (Open Space/Natural Areas) and E (Walkable) ranked the highest followed by images F (Trails) and D (Parks).

6. Commercial development can occur in many different forms, from large strip shopping centers to small neighborhood uses, to walkable mixed used centers. Evaluate the following images based on how you would like to see commercial areas be developed or redeveloped.



Images D (Cottage/Neighborhood shopping) and E (Lifestyle Center) ranked the highest. The majority of respondents ranked images A (Power Center) and F (Mixed Use) favorably, however a large number also ranked them negatively, placing them in the neutral range.

7. Office spaces can be designed in a number of ways from campus style development, to multi-story office buildings, to single story uses. Please evaluate the following examples and provide your opinion of what is appropriate for League City.



Images A (Suburban) and C (Stand Alone) were ranked the highest. Image E (Industrialized Office) was ranked negatively. The majority of respondents ranked images B (Campus), D (Urban) and F (Mixed Use) favorably, however a large number of respondents also ranked them negatively, placing them in the neutral range.

8. Street design has an important impact on the character of an area, its functionality and overall experience for its users. Evaluate the following **residential street designs** and provide your opinion on what you find appealing.



Images A (Village Street) and B (Suburban Parkway) were ranked the highest. Image D (Auto-Dominant Street) was ranked negatively. Images C (Suburban Street), E (Traditional Street) and F (Urban Boulevard) were placed in the neutral range with a large number of respondents ranking the images both favorably and negatively.

9. Evaluate the following **commercial street designs** and provide your opinion on what you find appealing.



Image A (Suburban Boulevard) was ranked the highest. Images B (Auto-Dominant Boulevard) and E (Auto-Dominant Street) were ranked negatively. The majority of respondents ranked image F (Urban Street) favorably, however a large number also ranked the image negatively, placing it in the neutral range.

10. Rank each photo of a public space/gathering place needed in League City.



Each image was rated favorably with Community Parks/Greens ranked the highest followed by Plazas and Cafes.