



midtown
HOUSTON

REIMAGINE MIDTOWN

Service and Improvement Plan
2023 Community Survey



SCOPE + PROCESS

In 2023 we designed, coordinated and implemented focus groups, community surveys, staff and consultant meetings, and lobbying to develop a proposed service and assessment plan for the Midtown Management District.

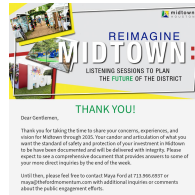
We engaged in direct and indirect engagement with property owners, businesses, residents, and visitors that inspire, and convert their voices into actionable plans.

This engagement was implemented via a 2 part effort from September - November 2023. The campaign included a comprehensive communications platform for Midtown Management District to invite, educate, influence, and prompt residents to inform and advocate for the service plan in 2024 and beyond.

SCOPE + PROCESS

Our qualitative assessment was founded in 5 listening sessions with 30+ core stakeholders from September 20 - 27, 2023. These sessions identified more than 100 insights related to the MMD service plan.

We used this information to conduct a quantitative survey to the district-at-large that confirms and directs data-informed decision making for the plan. The survey was distributed from October 6 - November 19, 2023 via Qualtrics and had more than 150 respondents provide insights.



WHAT'S IMPORTANT?		WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?	
MRA	MMD	MPC	OTHER



ANALYSIS BY DEMOGRAPHICS

RESPONDENTS

34% residents
25% residential property owners

Two assessment payor groups weigh the responses:

34% are residents

25% are residential property owners

12% are business owners

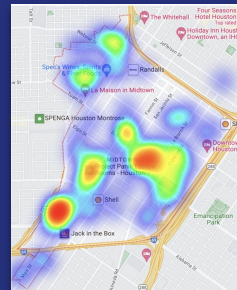
5% are commercial property owners.

The remaining percentage of respondents reported that they attend church or work in Midtown.

GEOGRAPHY

75+ respondents from within Midtown

The average amount of time in the district ranges equally between 1 and 15+ years, although **30% of the respondents have been engaged with the district for 8 - 15 years.**



PRIORITIES

Public Safety
Service + Maintenance

When asked to rank the importance of the following factors, the respondents chose:

1. **Public Safety**
2. **Service and Maintenance**
3. Marketing
4. Economic Development
5. Cultural Arts
6. Urban Planning

ANALYSIS BY COMMITTEE: PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety is consistently the primary issue addressed in both listening sessions and public inquiry. When asked what concerns them most about public safety in Midtown, they responded as follows:

1. Loitering/vagrant persons
2. Burglaries/robberies
3. Vacant building/properties
4. Walking, riding or driving
5. Poor lighting
6. Not enough affordable housing
7. Other
8. Not enough access to healthcare or emergency services

Respondents were asked if they felt concerned about their property and personal well being.

Nearly 50% of respondents have had a security incident in the past 12 months, 25% were unreported.

34% reported to HPD, 13% reported to the County Constable 07, 8% reported to METRO Police, 8% reported to 311, 6% reported to See.Click.Fix.

5% state that they reported to all of the agencies listed above.

Respondents were asked if they provide their own security services.

51% of respondents pay for their own security services for their properties and/or businesses.

ANALYSIS BY COMMITTEE: SERVICE + MAINTENANCE

SATISFACTION

**43% of
respondents are
satisfied**

41% of the respondents said they are dissatisfied with service and maintenance in Midtown;

43% stated that they are satisfied;

16% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

ENGAGEMENT

**60% of respondents
are not engaged in
service/maintenance**

Approximately 20% of respondents said they use See.Click.Fix., contact a Midtown representative, or participate in a committee meeting a few times per year.

More than **60% of all respondents stated they never engage with MMD's methods for service and maintenance.**

EXPECTATIONS

**40% of respondents
feel services are on
par**

51% of respondents feel concerned that safety, cleanliness, and maintenance isn't a priority in Midtown;

40% felt that the services are on par with other similar districts.



ANALYSIS BY COMMITTEE: MARKETING

TOUCH POINTS

Social media, word of mouth, and email/newsletter marketing are the primary ways respondents get information about Midtown.

MMD CLIENTS

28% of respondents own or manage a public facing business

Their primary modes of marketing are:

- 27% social media;
- 22% email campaigns;
- 18% event calendars;
- 11% SEO;
- 7% radio/TV

TOOLS

The most regularly used communication tools these business owners use from Midtown are email blasts, social and digital media and special events calendars.

ANALYSIS BY COMMITTEE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Respondents were asked what opportunities for economic development MMD should consider.

“

More advertising for space rentals- either local events or for tenants (boutique shops etc.). Permanent or pop-up. Any way for more people to want to stop by or build a business in the area. Consider demographics as the area grows (city planning).

Community engagement to facilitate the needs of business owners. Vacant buildings should be developed or at least maintained/secured. What incentives are being offered to these properties? Perhaps a tear down is required and replace with green space.

Incentives for vacant properties to be activated. Could MMD's assessment be a split tax (higher on land than improvements)?

If safety and security aren't addressed nothing else matters. We have customers who are afraid to walk back to their cars with the craziness on our streets. Our staff is equipped with mace now.

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ANALYSIS BY COMMITTEE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Respondents were asked what opportunities for economic development MMD should consider.

“

I believe that homeowners, in particular, and residents, in general, of midtown live and move here for a style of life; walkability, good restaurants, Pub-like bars, and proximity to downtown and theaters. I think the opportunity is to tip the scales of business development/attraction to higher quality restaurants and businesses that cater to the homeowner demographic. I think there is an opportunity to improve landscaping, maintenance, and overall look and feel of Midtown; much like Kirby between say Alabama and Westheimer.

Midtown Management should partner with government officials to create an actionable plan to ensure that nightclub owners are incentivized to be good neighbors to midtown residents (it seems the scales are tipped in favor of making money, not friends). There is an opportunity to manage traffic flows to enhance walkability. Currently it is especially dangerous to walk across Bagby, Brazos, Smith, and Louisiana (between Gray and Tuam) on weekends. The number of red lights that are ignored and people who travel the wrong way is appalling; It speaks to the fact that many are just in midtown for the weekend. In short, the feed between I45 and the spur to 59 can be managed differently. Economic development can be spurred/supported by seeking to attract more homeowners. Homeowner's will be attracted by livability, walkability, restaurants, etc, as said above; it's circular.

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ANALYSIS BY COMMITTEE: CULTURAL ARTS

MMD CLIENTS

15% of the respondents own or manage a cultural arts and/or entertainment venue

67% of respondents are aware that MMD is a Cultural Arts District

PARTICIPATION

25% - 30% participate in arts and entertainment

An average of 25 - 35% of respondents participate in arts and entertainment activities 3 or more times per year;

25% attend performing and visual arts shows, 24% visit galleries and commercial art stores, and 36% patron bars and nightclubs.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Can the district can improve quality of life through arts and entertainment?

33% responded they'd like more communication about programming and shows;

32% responded they'd need more safety for access to venues;

19% said they'd like more support for diverse and inclusive programming;

11% said they'd like to be provided with support to ensure the arts are more financially accessible to them.

ANALYSIS BY COMMITTEE: URBAN PLANNING

MOBILITY

65% of respondents feel it is easy to move around Midtown.

43% of respondents stated they can choose to not drive a car to access their needs and wants in Midtown;
32% feel the design and flow of Midtown makes it easy for them to safely move around to live, work and play;
25% feel there is ample parking.

ENGAGEMENT

We asked the frequency of engagement:

41% public parks and spaces for rest;
26% sidewalks;
22% public lighting;
21% bike lanes.

SAFETY

Safety continues to inhibit use of the infrastructure.

“Crime and homelessness ruin all the above. The layout is fine, the parking is terrible, the lighting is good in some places and bad in others.”

“The public spaces and benches are over run with trash and homeless.”

ANALYSIS BY COMMITTEE: URBAN PLANNING

Respondents provided more context on urban planning.

“

We used to take the rail often but now with the amount of mentally ill and vagrants on the platforms and on the rail you feel unsafe and vulnerable

We need more (clean, dependable) public transportation and better, smoother sidewalks for those who are unstable on their feet / use assistance to move around like wheelchairs, etc. there needs to be much less of an emphasis on driving and more on walking / biking / taking public transit. We would love to see more shops / boutiques that are available - and less nefarious activity that would discourage someone from walking through a certain area.

One of the great struggles of Midtown, is the lack of synchronization of lights, this leads to troubles for both cars and pedestrians. The cars are speeding to try to hit the next light on green, the pedestrians are just doing the best that they can and trying not to get killed by a car. It does feel like the lights not being synchronized are a plot to slow down traffic, the bad news is it doesn't work and it just makes the driver's angry. We definitely need traffic calming to make our urban environment better.

I wish I didn't have to drive. The Bicycle bikes are a nice idea but they cost more than an uber especially if it's more than one person. When you add the inconvenience of having to find another station to park it in, it's a dealbreaker. The light rail is just not safe enough for women to use when it is dark and barely so in the day. Walking through some streets can be pretty dangerous so you have to strategically pick streets that don't have homeless people and are well lit

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COMMUNITY + STAFF INTERACTION

Respondents were asked about their experience with engaging with the Board of Directors and Staff.

“

Staff seems well intentioned but it's difficult to get answers. Service and maintenance projects are delayed without clear explanation. Public safety and noise issues are being addressed well.

Staff could do more to make engaging with Midtown easy for residents and business owners. We don't care if something is MMD or MRA or MPC responsibility. They are mostly the same staff and should work together to get things done.

Jaime Giraldo, head of security, is the main person I communicate with. He is always so responsive and really cares about my concerns for security at my building. At my properties, there have been at least ten break-in and/or break-in attempts in the last year. Jaime has given me the great tip of contacting SEAL security officers, who have also been wonderful. Midtown must extend SEAL's contract and expand SEAL's presence by having more officers. I think that sometimes they are more courageous and eager to help than law enforcement. Keep the great work, Jaime!

In the 20 + years I have lived in the district, I continue to be impressed by the changes and direction the neighborhood is moving. Having been a resident for so long, I have the benefit of remembering how it used to be. Slowly, but surely, the neighborhood has improved...in my opinion, the neighborhood is one of the safest in the city, and I am happy to be here. Is it perfect, no! It is an urban neighborhood, and there will always be issues and challenges. My point of contact at Midtown has always been Cynthia Alvarado. I can not say enough about what an asset Cynthia is to the district.

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COMMUNITY + STAFF INTERACTION

Respondents were asked about their experience with engaging with the Board of Directors and Staff.

“

I have had a great experience and feel listened to. I do find it odd that the public comments section is at the beginning of the meeting and that the board cannot respond to the comments either. ALL meetings really need to be hybrid so that people may participate that want to.

They have been nice but aren't very visible or accessible. The locked doors and elaborate procedures even if you are invited to the office suggest they are more worried about safety than I am. I wonder, do they live here?

They can engage and communicate with the community better. Get to know the people that live in the neighborhood and address their concerns.

They could engage more with the community. They should explain what they are doing rather than expecting people to attend inconvenient meeting and review meeting minutes. The email newsletter should explain what midtown is doing rather than simply repeating the exact same events (eg zumba, get fit, etc) that have been happening for years. Tell us what you are doing. Reach out more. Midtown feels very unresponsive to needs of residents.

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SOLUTION PLANNING + NEXT STEPS

- Took a step back in the entire SIP process to secure more stakeholder feedback.
- Provided more clarity in the SIP language.
- Realigned long standing Core Service Areas and budgets to prioritize:
 - Public Safety
 - Services & Maintenance
 - Economic Development
- **Public Safety enhancement efforts include:**
 - Cultural Arts is now primarily funded through restricted use grant funds.
 - By removing assessment dollars from Cultural Arts, there is now 24-hour security.
 - SEAL Security is now patrolling 24-hours, 7 days a week in Midtown branded vehicles.
 - \$467K in additional Public Safety enhancements (FLOCK, directed enforcement, targeted community cleanups, HPD Bike Patrol)
 - Although Midtown cannot enforce city ordinances we have provided funding to enhance patrols / enforcement of the city of Houston Loud Noise Ordinance.
 - Completed enhanced lighting in Bagby Park.
 - Completed Baldwin Park pedestrian lighting project
 - Additional signature Midtown Coach Lighting planned for 2025.
- **Service and Maintenance efforts include:**
 - Major sidewalk improvements are taking place in 2025 (Truxillo and Isabella Streets)
 - \$1M - 65 block street-scape refresh (Elgin, Gray & Main) The project may include, but is not limited to, the following: landscape management and preservation, irrigation system calibration / upgrades, replace missing or damaged landscape /tree/, replace litter bins.
- **New Economic Development efforts include:**
 - Re-launched the Midtown E-News with dedicated sections focused on promoting Midtown businesses and their events.
 - Launched a new Community + Business events calendar on the Midtown website to further amplify Midtown businesses and events.
 - Created the new Economic Development Committee.
 - Worked with our PR team to secure 1-2 news placements per quarter featuring Midtown businesses and events.