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Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan

Neighborhood Poll #2 Summary

Many thanks to our friends in Munster for participating in Poll #2! The poll was open between February 12 and March 5, 2021. Based on the inputs received during earlier outreach activities, Poll #2 delved further into streetscape design issues, including visual preference surveys and responses to renderings at Ridge Road and Calumet Avenue. Some stats follow below:

470 folks participated in the visual preference survey and provided **832** original comments.

109 people voted and provided original comments for the Calumet Avenue rendering.

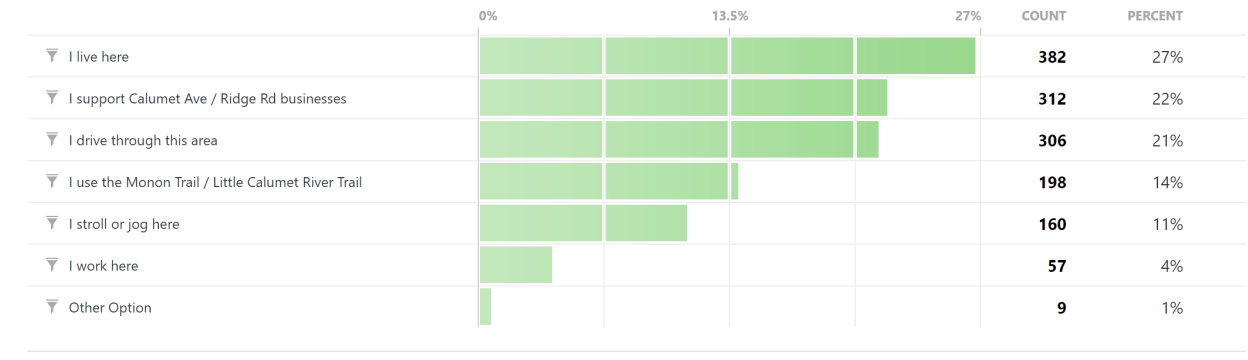
136 people voted and provided original comments for the Ridge Road rendering.



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Like the previous poll, we received responses from people who feel a strong sense of connection to the Town of Munster. Respondents reported that they call Munster their home (27%), support Calumet Avenue / Ridge Road businesses (22%), drive through the area (21%), use the Monon Trail and/or Little Calumet River Trail (14%), Stroll or jog in the area (11%) and work in Munster (4%).

Poll #2 Participant Profile | Neighborhood Connection








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Traffic calming was identified as a need along Calumet Avenue. In your opinion, which type of traffic calming is most appropriate for Calumet Avenue? (select one)

When presented with sample photos and asked which type of traffic calming is most appropriate for Calumet Avenue, the following inputs were received:

<p>35%</p>	<p>Landscaped center median</p>	
<p>33%</p>	<p>Mid-block crossings / pedestrian refuge islands</p>	
<p>31%</p>	<p>Parkway trees and lawn plantings</p>	

71 individual comments were provided. Repeated responses and themes include:

- Long term and seasonal maintenance is critical for any improvements.
- Maintain clear and open views, especially for turning vehicles.
- Some comments reflected concerns about the amount of available space for the proposed improvements. Please refer to the existing + proposed roadway sections for information.
- Key quotes include:
 - *“I think the median would help with traffic calming, especially if it limited turn movements”*
 - *“Both landscaped center medians and pedestrian refuge crossings. We need to eliminate semi trucks stopping in the middle of Calumet and parking there.”*
 - *“Because I want to see more pedestrian activity, this would encourage safer crossings on a very heavily traveled roadway.”*



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A vibrant downtown environment was noted as a key opportunity along Ridge Road. In your opinion, which streetscape treatment is the best fit for Ridge Road? (select one)

When presented with sample photos and asked which type of streetscape treatment is most appropriate for Ridge Road, the following inputs were received:

<p>54%</p>	<p>Wider sidewalks for outdoor seating + dining</p>	
<p>30%</p>	<p>Active trails + strolling</p>	
<p>15%</p>	<p>Sculptural seating + lush plantings</p>	

60 individual comments were provided. Repeated responses and themes include:

- Pedestrian use areas need to be safely buffered from Ridge Road traffic.
- Outdoor patios should be coordinated with businesses.
- Safety and visibility along Ridge Road between motorists and pedestrians is critical.
- Key quotes include:
 - *“With COVID changing the norm, I think it’s super important to allow for restaurants and cafes to have outdoor seating and the space available to do so.”*
 - *“Trails for bikes is the biggest opportunity – they need to connect to broader regional trails and should be protected from cars. Even if that means taking a lane away from drivers. With bikers, a new train and the emergence of self-driving cars in the near future, traffic demand should be curbed not expanded.”*
 - *“So many people drive down Ridge merely as commuters. I think by widening sidewalks and creating more eating/drinking plus boutique type shops, we could not only give Munster residents a reason to stay local, but we could capture people who would otherwise pass through.”*



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Earlier comments suggested that a protected bike trail is preferred over on-street bike lanes along Ridge Rd. In your opinion, which trail treatment is preferred for Ridge Rd? (select one)

When presented with sample photos and asked which type of bike trail treatment is most appropriate for Ridge Road, the following inputs were received:

<p>40%</p>	<p>Off-street concrete bikeway at sidewalk level</p>	
<p>31%</p>	<p>On-street concrete bikeway with landscape buffer</p>	
<p>29%</p>	<p>On-street asphalt bikeway with landscape buffer</p>	

44 individual comments were provided. Repeated responses and themes include:




- Some comments reflected concerns about the amount of available space for the proposed improvements. Please refer to the existing + proposed roadway sections for information.
- Asphalt is noted as more comfortable for biking and running than concrete.
- Key quotes include:
 - *“I like any of these ideas since I don’t feel safe on my bicycle and typically go another way.”*
 - *“...prefer for bikeway and sidewalk to be separated, otherwise pedestrians tend to use the bike lane inadvertently.”*
 - *“Traverse City, MI had a similar problem with congestion, and they redesigned and narrowed lanes, with landscaped medians, which resulted in less cars and happier residents. The more a road LOOKS like a highway... the more it becomes just that.”*



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Trees and plantings were noted as important features of the streetscape. In your opinion, which planting treatments are the best fit for Munster? (select one)

When presented with sample photos and asked which type of bike trail treatment is most appropriate for Ridge Road, the following inputs were received:

<p>41%</p>	<p>Bioswale plantings + decorative gravel</p>	
<p>36%</p>	<p>Rain gardens</p>	
<p>23%</p>	<p>Native grasses + plantings</p>	

42 individual comments were provided. Repeated responses and themes include:

- Native plantings are preferred.
- A commitment to maintenance is needed.
- Maintain clear open views for motorists, pedestrians and bikers
- Key quotes include:
 - *“Rain gardens seem very cool. There is a great opportunity for community involvement or a community garden where neighborhoods could be encouraged to take ownership or pride in their street dressings.”*
 - *“I think managing the water run off is important.”*
 - *“Future maintenance costs must be included in any decision.”*



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A community fest and event space was noted as a desired feature of the plan. What type of community event would be most appealing to you? (select all that apply)

When asked which type of community event would be most appealing, (31%) selected Food Event, (27%) selected Live Music, (20%) selected Art Fair, (15%) selected Local Business Event, and (8%) selected Car Show.

	0%	15.5%	31%	COUNT	PERCENT
Food event				367	30.61%
Live music				328	27.36%
Art fair				238	19.85%
Local business event				174	14.51%
Car show				92	7.67%
Total Votes:				1199	100%

61 individual comments were provided. Repeated responses and themes include:




- Community events should be organized in partnership with, and to support, local businesses.
- Centennial Park is an attractive local resource that should be programmed.
- Griffith (“Friday Nights”), Lansing, and Highland were noted as communities with attractive events programs that can be emulated in Munster.
- Key quotes include:
 - *“A “Taste of Ridge” event would be awesome!”*
 - *“Additional open space with events would help make the Ridge corridor a destination and greatly enhance the desirability of the area!”*
 - *“If the area was walkable, then food and local business events would be a great way to encourage small businesses in the area.”*
 - *“There is a broad range of cultures in our area which makes possible some kind of ethnic food festival showcasing a variety of foods from around the world.”*
 - *“A true farmer’s market would be so wonderful and pop-ups from local restaurants and breweries.”*



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In your opinion, which pedestrian scale light is the best fit for Ridge Road? (select one)

When presented with sample photos and asked which type of pedestrian scale light is most appropriate for Ridge Road, the following inputs were received:

Shepherd’s Crook	Caged Acorn (Hohman Avenue)	Post Top
55%	34%	11%
		

42 individual comments were provided. Repeated responses and themes include:

- Practicality is key: costs and maintenance considerations are important in the final selection.
- Minimize light pollution.
- Comments both for and against implementing Caged Acorns, which have a historic appearance.
- Considerations for light pole spacing and comments that the existing pedestrian lights appear to be too closely spaced.
- Key quotes include:
 - *“Should be consistent with what’s being done in Centennial Village and the two TOD stations.”*
 - *“I think that energy efficient lights that don’t light up the sky are best, there is too much light pollution.”*
 - *“Alllll the charm. The details matter. Don’t be basic.”*



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Paint us a picture along Calumet Avenue: Thinking ahead to the future, please describe a scene you wish to see along Calumet Avenue.

241 individual comments were provided. Repeated responses and themes include:

- **Calmer traffic.** Calumet Ave traffic should be calmed so that it feels safer for all users.
- **More pedestrian friendly.** Street design should provide safe access for pedestrians along and across Calumet Avenue.
- **Updated buildings.** Improve building facades along Calumet Avenue and attract quality businesses.
- **Greening.** Enhance the landscape with trees and plantings.
- **Munster Identity.** Calumet Avenue is the first glimpse of Munster for many and this corridor should be improved to be a welcoming entrance to the community and to express Munster's unique identity and character.

- Key quotes include:
 - *"Clean, organized and full of families and community."*
 - *"Living in Munster for decades, it would be nice to see a more inviting atmosphere driving down Calumet Ave. I would like to see businesses that bring people in, shops, live music and more food places, living spaces like condos, and a place where you want to walk or bike there and just enjoy the atmosphere."*
 - *"Smooth moving traffic, along with lush green landscaping and pedestrian friendly walking and biking."*
 - *"Families walking and biking to restaurants or areas where they can picnic in the summer. Visit Carmel, Indiana for reference along the Monon Trail bike path."*
 - *"Not a poet, but I would like to see this area be visually, much softer with landscaping. More screening from the multiple parking fields. More pedestrian friendly at the businesses that are close to the street."*
 - *"Honestly, I'd just love to be able to feel protected from traffic while riding my bike with my family to get an Italian Ice."*
 - *"Being that I live on Jefferson Avenue parallel to Calumet Avenue, I've always wanted a more pedestrian friendly sidewalk and crosswalk. People from these neighborhoods should be encouraged to walk to the stores as I always have. However, it's always stressful crossing Broadmoor and Calumet. I would definitely love to see greener spaces with native trees and wild grasses between the sidewalks and the street. No more concrete jungles pretty please! I want Munster to be more lush and inviting!"*



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Paint us a picture along Ridge Road: Thinking ahead to the future, please describe a scene you wish to see along Ridge Road.

231 individual comments were provided. Repeated responses and themes include:

- ***Calm and manage traffic.*** Ridge Road should allow traffic to move safely and also should better accommodate pedestrians, bikers and businesses in the area. Consider better connectivity and neighborhood friendly traffic calming at surrounding streets.
- ***More parking.*** Support Ridge Road businesses with ample parking.
- ***Outdoor seating.*** Incorporate wider sidewalks to provide opportunities for businesses to expand and activate the sidewalks.
- ***Bike path.*** Maximize the nearby Monon Trail with an interconnected bike path.
- ***Greenery.*** Landscaping will provide much needed buffering to the street and serve to protect pedestrians.
- ***Family friendly, neighborhood vibe.*** Munster is a unique and welcoming community. Build off of this to establish Ridge Road as a truly unique attractive destination that is welcoming to residents and visitors.
- Key quotes include:
 - *“Coffee shops, protected bike path! 313 and Bombers are already the backbone of what Ridge could become.”*
 - *“Small town, community events, walkable, landscaped”*
 - *“A destination for more than take out or grocery shopping! I would love to see an active night life here – not bars, but a plethora of choices for dining outdoors, space to walk and ride with your family, while stopping to look at the plants and sit a while on benches – and space for our local small businesses to have shops in the main square of Cal/Ridge.”*
 - *“Having weekends in the summer where restaurants and even food trucks can sell food. It would be a place where people can eat and shop the stores on Ridge.”*
 - *“On a serious note, 10 years from now I would love to feel comfortable knowing my daughters could ride their bikes east on Ridge Road from White Oak to Columbia in order to get to MHS. The bike lanes would be really nice. Also bike lanes on Ridge Road would help connect to the new bike lane on Hohman Ave.”*
 - *“People strolling and not feeling scared to be hit by a speeding car. Areas to stop and eat outside. Love for our town to be more of a walking/biking community.”*
 - *“Calmer, more accessibility to the businesses with wider sidewalks. Lansing, Highland and Griffith have vibrant small businesses and Munster doesn’t have that same feel.”*



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North Calumet Avenue rendering. The North Calumet Avenue improvements include replacing the steel rail with a steel backed wood guardrail, gateway entry sign, light poles and plantings. A mid block pedestrian crossing and landscaped refuge island is proposed north of River Drive. Mural art may be coordinated with the hospital.

The following 'before and after' imagery was posted to the project website with an input tool that invited a 'thumbs up/thumbs down' response plus open ended comments.

The following inputs were provided: Thumbs up: 85 // Thumbs down: 24





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North Calumet Avenue rendering (*continued*)

109 individual responses were provided.

Repeated responses and themes for the North Calumet Avenue improvements include:

- ***Maintenance.*** Improvements to this area require additional maintenance which should be factored into the design.
- ***Safety and sight lines.*** Ensure that landscaping and other improvements maintain clear and open views for motorists and pedestrians.
- ***Pedestrian crossing.*** There were some concerns about adding a pedestrian crossing at this location due to current traffic speeds and volume. The pedestrian crossing would be reinforced by additional signage and landscaping to alert motorists of the crosswalk.
- ***Murals.*** There were mixed reviews about the mural graphic depicted. The purpose of the rendering is to identify the wall as a possibility for artwork. This would require coordination with the Hospital and likely would engage with a local artist to create a custom piece for Munster.

- Key quotes include:
 - *“I like that it is welcoming and shows you are entering the town.”*
 - *“I agree. The current look is not a great representation of what Munster should look like at the busiest entrance of the town. Not welcoming at all.”*
 - *“I think it looks amazing!! It enhances the positive sense of Munster as a community, whether it is a visit to a health center or restaurant or coming home. I think it would also decrease traffic issues and increase safety.”*
 - *“Love the Munster signage and more welcoming feel.”*



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Ridge Road at Meadow Lane rendering. The Ridge Road at Meadow Lane improvements include flexible improvements that support parking and traffic access between Ridge Road and the neighborhoods to the north. Periodically, the space may be closed to traffic via movable planter pots to support community fests and events. Proposed enhancements include overhead string lighting, site furnishings, signage and painted roadway. Mural art may be coordinated with the Owner.

The following 'before and after' imagery was posted to the project website with an input tool that invited a 'thumbs up/thumbs down' response plus open ended comments.

The following inputs were provided: Thumbs up: 111 // Thumbs down: 25





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Ridge Road at Meadow Lane rendering (*continued*)

136 individual responses were provided.

Repeated responses and themes for the North Calumet Avenue improvements include:

- **Maintenance.** Improvements to this area require additional maintenance which should be factored into the design.
- **Traffic and Meadow Lane Closure.** Some comments raised concerns about whether residents would permanently lose access between Ridge Road and the neighborhoods to the north. This concept considers temporary closures for specific events only and would not be a permanent closure.
- **Business facades.** Surrounding businesses should improve their facades, awnings and signage. While private site and building improvements are not part of the public streetscape project, the Town has efforts underway to assist property owners with façade enhancements.
- **Is it worth it?** Some folks wondered whether it's worth it to invest in a space like this. Many communities have found that when small pop up events are programmed in business districts like Ridge Road, they tend to attract more people to the area, benefitting businesses.
- **Murals.** There were mixed reviews about the mural graphic depicted. The purpose of the rendering is to identify the wall as a possibility for artwork. This would require coordination with the Owner and likely would engage with a local artist to create a custom piece for Munster.
- Key quotes include:
 - *"I like this. Whiting has this along 119th Street. This would help compliment the streetscape."*
 - *"Love it! Downtown Valpo is a great example. They use planters to block the intersection of Lafayette and Lincolnway and have adaptable traffic signals to close off turns during festivals."*
 - *"Yes! I work at Schoops..... we've always dreamed of having big enough sidewalks to have outdoor dining."*
 - *"Definitely for this! Especially if there was more food/music related events including a real farmer's market. Artwork by local (meaning NWI) artists would be key. Also, would like to see more non-chain restaurants and shops open up."*
 - *"Love it. Creates a space where you'd like to be. Gives teens a place to hang and be with each other. Allows for something to do in Munster. Makes it look newer/fresh, instead of old and dated."*



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Thank you again for sharing your thoughts via the second neighborhood poll. All feedback is being thoroughly recorded and reviewed. We really appreciate the practical and creative comments.

Next steps: Join us at the virtual open house!

Details on the following page and at the project website:

<https://munster-streetscape.org>