

Committee of the Whole Meeting
City Hall - 1707 St Johns Avenue
June 8, 2026
4:30 PM
Agenda

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- I. Call to Order**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Scheduled Business**
 - A. Place of Remembrance Engagement Report and Unified Design Concept
- IV. Closed Session**
- V. Adjournment**

Staff Report



Meeting Date: June 8, 2026

Staff Contact: Emily Taub, Assistant City Manager
Amanda Bennett, Communications Manager
Jazmin Alejandro, Social Services Specialist

Department: City Manager's Office

Title: Place of Remembrance Engagement Report and Unified Design Concept

Recommendation:

City staff, SWA Group, and All Together will present information about phase 2 community engagement, present a single unified concept design for the permanent Place of Remembrance, and facilitate a discussion with members of the Council to obtain Council feedback on the unified concept design.

Policy Consideration:

Design Process Overview

In January, 2026, the City entered into an agreement with SWA Group for the design of the permanent Place of Remembrance, including the prominent primary location at the Rose Garden, and the subtle, secondary location at Port Clinton Plaza. The design and construction process is divided into [five phases](#) discussed in detail, with milestones, [on the City's website](#).

The first phase, Ideation, represented an opportunity for the design team to meet the community and hear feedback on potential design elements through a comprehensive public engagement strategy developed by SWA Group's partner consultant, All Together. Working in partnership with City staff, SWA Group and All Together implemented a tiered approach to this phase of community engagement in line with that of the [Location Feedback Survey](#) (2025; see below) and the Place of Remembrance [communications plan](#). Feedback during the Ideation phase focused on mood boards and open-ended questions to help the team actively develop ideas and concept designs from community feedback. This phase entailed ideation listening sessions from victims' families, individuals who were injured, and first responders, focus groups with various stakeholders, including parade participants, government and resource partners and others who assisted with the shooting response, including City staff, a listening session at the Committee of the Whole (February 23, 2026), a community workshop, and a public survey. This phase also included an initial joint conversation between the Committee of the Whole and the Historic Preservation Commission, with respect to considerations pertaining to the historic landmark at

the Rose Garden on [March 9, 2026](#).

The Ideation phase resulted in the three design concepts that were presented at a public meeting of the Working Group on May 7, 2026 and at the Council design concept listening session at the Committee of the Whole on May 11, 2026. The engagement report summarizing quantitative and qualitative feedback received is [available](#) on the City's website.

The second phase, Design Concepting, began in May and will continue throughout June. During Design Concepting, the design team presented the three concept designs informed by the public engagement from the Ideation phase to the community to receive feedback on the concepts. Individual outreach to victims' family members and people who were injured was conducted by the Resiliency Division and in person listening sessions were held with the design team. Public workshops were held on May 9 and May 11 in addition to multiple opportunities to view the concepts at City Hall to reach and receive input from the community. A community wide survey was also conducted online and in paper format.

An engagement report summarizing the information shared by victims and the community is attached to this report and available on the City's website. This information will also be presented to City Council at the Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, June 8. The comprehensive feedback informed the development of a single unified design concept which will also be shared with the City Council on June 8. A presentation to the Historic Preservation Commission on June 24 will follow the discussion at the Committee of the Whole presentation of the unified design concept.

Subsequent design phases will include Design Development (anticipated July - September 2026), Construction Documentation (anticipated September - December 2026), and Construction (anticipated 2027 - completion) – information on these phases is [available](#) on the City's website. The construction timeline will be developed after the final design is determined and a construction manager has been onboarded. RFP responses for construction manager services are due June 5, 2026.

Background

In 2023, the City Council established a Working Group to guide the planning process for the permanent Place of Remembrance for the Highland Park shooting. The Place of Remembrance has three primary objectives:

- Create an accessible public place for reflection, remembrance, and solace;
- Pay tribute to the memories of Katie Goldstein, Irina McCarthy, Kevin Michael McCarthy, Jacki Lovi Sundheim, Stephen Straus, Nicolas Toledo, and Eduardo Uvaldo;
- Honor the community's resiliency, especially those who were injured.

The Working Group has been meeting regularly since November of 2023, with all meeting notes and related documents available online at hpremembrance.org/meetings. As previously shared with Council and the public, key milestones include:

- Potential location brainstorm and development of the location shortlist (Port Clinton

Square, the southwest corner of St. Johns & Central, the Rose Garden): [February 27, 2024](#) & [April 3, 2024](#)

- RFP process for location feedback focus group & survey consultants: [August 27, 2024](#) (firm recommendation); October 15, 2024 ([Council approval](#))
- Location feedback public engagement process: November 2024 - January 2025; [March 31, 2025](#) (Working Group presentation); [April 14](#) & [April 25](#) (Committee of the Whole presentation); [Full downloadable report](#) recommending a prominent, primary Place of Remembrance at the Rose Garden and a subtle, secondary location at Port Clinton Plaza
- RFQ process for design services, a multi-phase process: April 30, 2025 (RFQ issued); [June 18, 2025](#) (shortlist developed for interviews & representative designs); [August 27, 2025](#) (Working Group recommendation); [October 6, 2025](#) (Committee of the Whole discussion and selection of SWA Group); [December 15, 2025](#) (Committee of the Whole update and budget determination); [January 12, 2026](#) (approval of agreement with SWA Group)

Core Priorities:

Fiscal Stability

The engagement of Do Tank for the location feedback survey and focus group facilitation was \$45,000.

The cost of the first stage of SWA's service agreement (project administration; listening, discovery, and community engagement; schematic design) is \$262,500 plus up to \$21,000 in reimbursable expenses (8% of the costs). The estimate provided by SWA for the second stage (design development; construction documentation; construction administration) is \$700,000 - \$1,250,000. The final determination on stage two costs will be made after a design is approved.

The City Council supported a preliminary budget of \$2 million for construction of the Place of Remembrance. Although Council direction was not to pursue active fundraising due to the broad impact of the shooting on the community, the City has received several donations to support this project, most notably a restricted gift of \$1 million from Jon & Mindy Gray among other similarly directed gifts for the Permanent Place of Remembrance.

Public Safety

The design concepts incorporate best practices for public safety and accessibility, including preservation of sightlines and hardscape that supports visitors who may be using mobility devices or pushing strollers.

Infrastructure Investment

The permanent Place of Remembrance will incorporate a primary installation at the Rose Garden and a subtle, secondary installation at Port Clinton Plaza. While the scale and nature of the designs will be different, each represents a significant infrastructure undertaking given the presence of existing structures at or adjacent to the site.

Environmental Sustainability

The design concepts take the City's commitment to environmentally sustainable practices into consideration through recommendations for native plantings and seasonality.

Attachments:

1. Phase 2 Engagement Summary

Highland Park

Place of Remembrance

Phase 2 | Design Concept Engagement Summary

June 2026

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Introduction

The City of Highland Park, in partnership with SWA Group and All Together, is creating a permanent place of remembrance honoring the seven victims of the Highland Park shooting and the broader community, especially those who were injured. The process is trauma-informed and multi-phased; full details are at hpremembrance.org/timeline.

This work builds on a [prior location study](#), with Do Tank, which concluded in January 2025 with a recommendation for a two-site approach: a prominent primary Place of Remembrance at the Rose Garden and a subtle, secondary Place of Remembrance at Port Clinton. The City Council supported the recommendation in April 2025.

[Phase 1: Design Ideation](#), completed in April 2026, gathered community input to shape early design directions. Phase 2: Design Concept Review built on that earlier input and presented three concepts to the community for feedback—Woven Together, Mending Lines (Rose Garden)/Love Letters (Port Clinton), and Petals—each offering a distinct approach to the Rose Garden (primary site) and Port Clinton Plaza (secondary site).

The community's feedback is vital in shaping the next direction for the Place of Remembrance. Across all stakeholder groups, Concept 1: Woven Together had the strongest support for the Primary Place of Remembrance at the Rose Garden.

At Port Clinton, the secondary site, there was no clear consensus on a design among both those directly impacted and the community at large. Feedback from both phases of engagement has prompted the City and design team to continue discussions about how best to approach this space. Key themes from those conversations are captured below and will inform the next step. For updates on process and timing, visit hpremembrance.org.

Engagement & Communications Strategy

Multi-Tiered Engagement

The engagement process started with those most closely connected and expanded out to the entire Highland Park community and neighboring communities. Every voice we heard was valuable in reviewing and gathering feedback to refine design concepts. For this document, references to each tier include but are not limited to the following:

- **Tier 1¹:** Next of kin, individuals present and injured
- **Tier 2:** Present not injured, critical hot zone helpers, parade participants, community leadership, resource partners, businesses, volunteers, first responders and medical professionals, donors, and others who provided support as part of the initial response and emergency management efforts, and those who live and work in proximity to either site.
- **Tier 3:** Community members and organizations at large.

¹ In Phase 2: Design Concept Review, Tier 1 listening sessions were offered to Next of Kin and Individuals Present and Injured to make sure the design team prioritized their input. This differs from Phase 1, in which Tier 1 included critical hot zone helpers, first responders, and medical professionals were included in individual listening sessions. In Phase 2, these stakeholders were personally invited to attend workshops, pop-ups, and complete the design survey.

Phase 2 communications were built on the Phase 1 framework while tailoring outreach to each stakeholder tier.

Feedback was collected between April and May 2026 through a variety of sources:

- **One-on-one Tier 1 listening sessions, phone calls, and letters** with next of kin, individuals present and injured, and others directly impacted.
- **A digital and print community-wide design concept survey** distributed broadly in English and Spanish via email, newsletters, social media, and partner outreach materials
- **Community Workshops** at The Moraine, Josselyn Center, City Hall, the Highland Park Senior Center, and Moraine Township
- **A Working Group meeting**
- **A Committee of the Whole session**
- **Visits by City Hall staff to ground-floor businesses** located at Port Clinton Square and along Central Ave. between First & Second Streets.
- **Letters** to residential and commercial property owners within an 800’ radius of the primary and secondary site of the Place of Remembrance

Reviewing Concepts

All participants, regardless of how they engaged, were asked to review the three concepts, rate how well each met the Phase 1 design criteria, share their reactions, and provide overall feedback for both the Rose Garden and Port Clinton.

Participants were not asked to rank concepts by preference. However, the feedback makes clear which concept was most preferred and how well it meets the design criteria. The data indicate strong support for specific design criteria across concepts. This approach allows the design team to consider and carry forward individual elements from all three concepts into the preferred design.

Timeline

Phase 1 Engagement Timeline



Phase 2 Engagement Timeline



Who We Heard From



² Flipping Book was used as an online host for embedded design concept presentations which collects views, unique visitors, and downloads.

Rose Garden Design Concept Feedback

All three concepts—Woven Together (Concept 1), Mending Lines (Concept 2), and Petals (Concept 3)—were presented across every engagement format. For each concept, participants responded to the same set of questions: what resonated, what feeling or thought the design sparked, and whether it met seven functional criteria established in Phase 1.

All design concepts are available to view at hpremembrance.org/design-concept-review

Concept 1: Woven Together

CONCEPT 1

Woven Together

Nature-based design with individual niches offering private space for remembrance

71%

liked or strongly liked

Concept 1 resonated most strongly across every group. Its nature-based elements—water, winding paths, trees, and seven niches offering spaces for private reflection—were consistently described as meaningful, moving, and appropriate. The ability to choose one's own path through the space, whether along a shared route or in a private niche, was praised for reflecting the different ways people grieve and remember.

"I love the niches which allow for privacy of families, and you don't feel like you're imposing when you're just walking by."

Tier 1 Listening Session Participant

"Concept 1 really resonated, capturing all of the themes really well. The ability to choose: go right down the middle or visit all 7 or just one of them."

Working Group Participant

"My wife and I were in the extreme epicenter of the shooting. And so my thoughts are to offer a memorial, offering a sense of peace and reflection. This [Concept 1] Rose Garden is preferable. The water feature and seating area are well thought out. Including the private seating areas."

Survey Participant

"I enjoy the seven niches. I think their names should be closer to the center seating area—they're part of the community. The niches will represent them, but at any point, you can sit down there privately without feeling like you're intruding on a family's private space."

Tier 1 Listening Session Participant

What Resonated

- The water feature and winding paths as symbols of life, resilience, and movement
- Seven niches symbolizing the victims
- Aspen trees are praised specifically for their seasonality, sound, and capacity to regenerate
- A space that rewards exploration and allows visitors to move at their own pace
- The design "feels like Highland Park."

Together HP: Place of Remembrance

Design Concept Results

Concept 1: Woven Together

Overall sentiment — 107 responses · 71% liked or strongly liked

3.82

/ 5.0 weighted average

YES

NO

Arrival — clear, welcoming, accessible entry	85% (82)	15% (15)
Discovery — invites exploration at one's own pace	88% (85)	12% (12)
Space for community	87% (84)	13% (13)
Acknowledgment — honors victims and community	80% (74)	20% (18)
Reflection — space to pause and process feelings	88% (83)	12% (11)
Gathering — supports intentional gathering	78% (74)	22% (21)
Appropriate for the context	80% (77)	20% (19)

Overall sentiment — 107 responses

Strongly dislike: 9 Dislike: 12 Neutral: 10 Like: 34 Strongly like: 42



"Woven Together is the best design and most like a healing garden."

Survey Respondent

“This feels intentional, safe, as well as peaceful.”

Survey Respondent

“As a community member with the most invisible wound (PTSD), I feel a sense of connection to this space. I hope that my family and I might use them for their [intended] purpose.”

Survey Respondent

“I love the oxygen that comes from this design. Makes you want to take a fresh breath.”

Survey Respondent

Open Design Questions Raised

- How circulation is managed so private niche moments are not interrupted by passersby
- How to acknowledge those who were physically injured, alongside those whose lives were taken
- Maintenance of living trees, rocks, and offerings over time
- Support that the council ring ties back to Jens Jensen
- ADA parking and full wheelchair accessibility through all pathways and niches
- Concern over linking each name to a specific niche could lead to disappointment if a family member visits to find their niche already occupied

Overall Rating

71% of respondents liked or strongly liked Woven Together (Concept 1), the highest among all concepts, which reflects consistent, broad-based support.

Concept 2: Mending Lines

CONCEPT 2

Mending Lines

Clean, open design with stone elements and a defined pathway

34%

liked or strongly liked

Concept 2 resonated for its openness and clean design. The stone and rock elements prompted the most conversation—practical questions around maintenance and children interacting with the rocks, and a meaningful cultural consideration: for many Jewish participants, stones at a memorial carry the specific association of a gravesite, which shifted the feeling for some from reflection toward mourning.

"Since it's symbolic of the Jewish tradition of bringing a stone to the headstone, you'll get a lot of people who engage with that. We just need to make sure there are people who can maintain it."

Tier 1 Listening Session Participant

"The rose garden version has more paved area and less garden than the first concept [Woven Together], and thus might feel sterile. But I do like the concentric circles."

Survey Respondent

"Looks a bit more open and inclusive for disabled people and more space to move around if there are more people."

Survey Respondent

Design Concept Results

Concept 2: Mending Lines

Overall sentiment — 94 responses · 34% liked or strongly liked

2.97

/ 5.0 weighted average

YES

NO

Arrival — clear, welcoming, accessible entry

68% (57)  |  32% (27)

Discovery — invites exploration at one's own pace

56% (46)  |  44% (36)

Space for community

75% (61)  |  25% (20)

Acknowledgment — honors victims and community

64% (49)  |  36% (28)

Reflection — space to pause and process feelings

57% (46)  |  42% (34)

Gathering — supports intentional gathering

75% (60)  |  25% (20)

Appropriate for the context

46% (36)  |  54% (43)

Overall sentiment — 94 responses

■ Strongly dislike: 9
 ■ Dislike: 30
 ■ Neutral: 23
 ■ Like: 19
 ■ Strongly like: 13



Concept 2's Yes/No profile reflects a design that works better for communal use than for individual use. Space for Community scored well, while Reflection and Discovery were nearly split. Contextual Appropriateness was the only criterion where No outweighed Yes.

Overall Rating

34% of respondents liked or strongly liked Concept 2; 24% were neutral; 42% disliked or strongly disliked it. Support was more limited than for the other concepts, and no stakeholder group identified it as their preference.

Concept 3: Petals

CONCEPT 3

Petals

Open, formal design with individual steel markers for each victim

25%

liked or strongly liked

Concept 3 drew more mixed responses. Some respondents described it as feeling cold, sterile, or institutional—particularly in winter, when open paved areas would feel stark. One consistent bright spot: Acknowledgment of Victims scored relatively well (the best single-criterion result for this concept), suggesting that lasting individual markers resonate even when the overall design doesn't land for everyone. A few respondents specifically appreciated that steel markers (petals) would honor victims across all seasons.

Tier 1 listening session responses were divided on the design element of petals in the field. Where participants saw potential, it was in carrying the art concept forward into Concept 1 or at Port Clinton, not in Concept 3 itself.

Together HP: Place of Remembrance

Design Concept Results

Concept 3: Petals

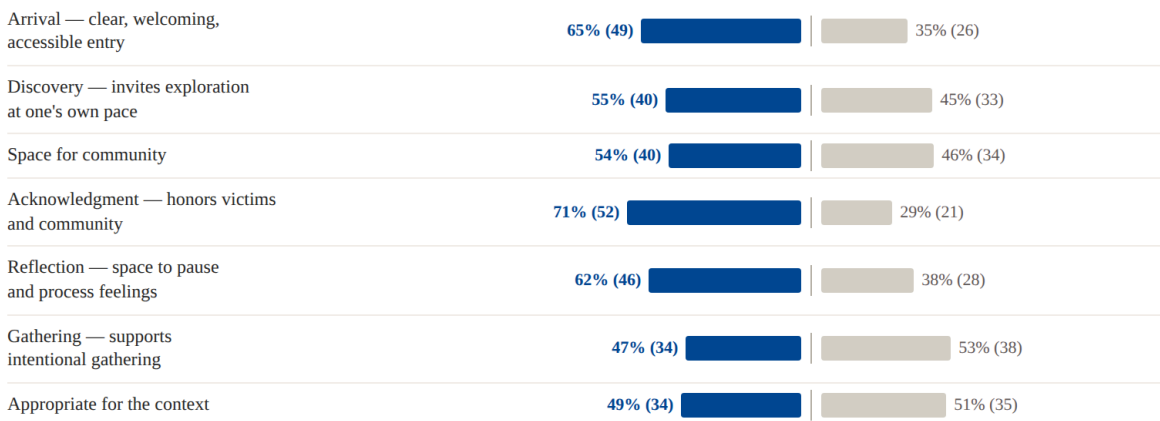
Overall sentiment — 92 responses · 25% liked or strongly liked

2.66

/ 5.0 weighted average

YES

NO



Overall sentiment — 92 responses

Strongly dislike: 16 Dislike: 29 Neutral: 24 Like: 16 Strongly like: 7



Concept 3's Yes/No profile stands apart from the other two. Acknowledgment scored highest, but Gathering was the only other criterion where No outweighed Yes. Most criteria were closely split, reflecting genuine uncertainty about whether the design meets the community's needs.

Overall Rating

25% of respondents liked or strongly liked Concept 3; 26% were neutral; 49% disliked or strongly disliked it.

Overall Concept Comparison

	Concept 1 · Woven Together	Concept 2 · Mending Lines	Concept 3 · Petals
Tier 1	1st preference	2nd preference	3rd preference
Survey: Liked / Strongly Liked	71%	34%	25%
Survey: Disliked / Strongly Disliked	19%	42%	49%

Concept 1: Woven Together is the clear preferred concept across all groups. It generated genuine emotional resonance, specific praise, and consistent alignment with what the community said it needed in Phase 1.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Across all engagement formats and all three concepts, several themes emerged consistently and should inform the next stage of design.

Nature is the primary material language: Respondents across every group described their strongest positive reactions in nature-based terms: water, greenery, trees, seasonal color, and the feeling of being held by a landscape. Concepts that leaned into this—particularly Concept 1—generated the most emotional engagement. Stark, paved, or sparse designs consistently felt cold and inappropriate.

Individual and collective acknowledgment matter deeply. The seven victims should be honored both individually and collectively. The niches in Concept 1 were specifically praised for giving families a sense of private space without requiring separation from the broader memorial. The presentation of the seven names and additional information should be developed in direct collaboration with families.

The space must work in every season: Year-round viability was raised across every group. Respondents specifically requested evergreen plantings, materials that age gracefully, and a design that carries meaning in winter. The symbolic dimension of seasonality—spring as renewal, winter as quiet persistence—was named as something the design should hold.

Accessibility is non-negotiable: Smooth pathways, snow- and salt-clearable surfaces, no gravel, adequate parking, seating, and railings where needed were raised as priorities across Tier 1 participants, Working Group members, and survey respondents. Accessibility was framed not only as a compliance requirement but as an act of care. The design should meet and, where possible, exceed ADA standards. This includes lighting, clean pathways, a guardrail around the water element, and other key elements that should be warmly and clearly lit so the space is safe and navigable after dark.

Safety and security should be felt. Respondents desired a space that feels protected without feeling surveilled. Security can be achieved through design, including clear sight lines, thoughtful lighting placement, and natural boundaries created by plantings and landscape features, rather than through fencing or institutional hardware that would undermine the space's openness.

Acknowledge those who were injured: Multiple Tier 1 participants and survey respondents asked that the design acknowledge the 48 individuals physically injured, as well as those whose lives were taken. The Rose Garden is the preferred location. The form (a separate inscription, a design element, or language acknowledging those "forever changed") warrants further consideration.

Plan for maintenance from the start. Living trees, stones, seasonal plantings, and visitor offerings all require committed maintenance plans. Several participants noted that design choices without clear maintenance commitments risk becoming painful, particularly around living trees as individual victim memorials, where the loss of a tree could cause additional grief for families.

Key Design Elements To Carry Forward

Across all concepts, the following elements reflect what the community shared as most important in this space. They have also been developed through a trauma-informed design³ lens—a framework that organizes design decisions around 11 domains, including Safety, Choice, Empowerment & Voice, Equity, and Community, among others. These domains help ensure that what was heard from the community translates into design decisions that support the full range of people who will visit, grieve, and find meaning in this place.

- A clear sense of transition as you move from the street into the memorial space: the act of entry should feel intentional, signaling to visitors that they are crossing into a place set apart from the everyday (*Safety, Trustworthiness & Transparency*)
- A water element, for its calming and sensory qualities, with consideration for maintenance and off-season appearance (*Comfort, Trustworthiness & Transparency*)
- Incorporating the symbolism of seven in the design: honoring the seven individually while holding them as part of the collective (*Empowerment & Voice, Community*)
- Acknowledgment of those who were injured and a thoughtful narrative that acknowledges all whose lives were changed, and tells a story that will resonate with the community years from now (*Equity, Community, Trustworthiness & Transparency*)
- Year-round color through a mix of evergreen and seasonal plantings, ensuring the space communicates care and continuity regardless of when a visitor arrives (*Comfort, Community*)
- Lighting that is warm, non-institutional, and carefully directed, illuminating pathways and elements without creating glare or surveillance-like brightness (*Safety, Comfort, Trustworthiness & Transparency*)
- Accessible pathways, clear sightlines, surfaces, and seating throughout so that all visitors can move through the space with dignity (*Accessibility, Equity, Safety, Movement*)
- A space that rewards slowing down: paths that take you somewhere without rushing you (*Comfort, Empowerment & Voice*)
- Cultural specificity: elements that honor Jewish and Latino traditions in ways meaningful to those communities (*Equity, Community, Collaboration & Mutuality*)
- Space for offerings and personal remembrance items, with a clear maintenance cadence (*Empowerment & Voice, Community, Trustworthiness & Transparency*)
- Art and sculpture as a complement to landscape: the design should hold something beyond stone (*Comfort, Community*)
- Privacy for families alongside openness for the broader community: these can coexist (*Safety, Peer Support, Choice*)

"I hope the final design is a place people can come and find peace and remember and gather."

Survey Respondent

³ Cowart, C. A., Roche, J. E., Erdman, A., & Harte, J. D. (2024). *Trauma-informed design: A framework for designers, architects, and other practitioners*. Trauma-informed Design Society.

"Hope the final design retains the entry from everyday bustle into an area of contemplation. Love the water element and the ability to approach the area both as a general member of the public and in a more intimate way."

Survey Respondent

Port Clinton Plaza

Port Clinton generated the most discordant and emotionally charged feedback across all three concepts. Responses were driven less by reactions to the designs themselves and more by deeper concerns: fear of losing the space, fear of retraumatization, and worry about the impact on downtown commerce.

Across all engagement, the most consistent themes are captured below—some of which are in tension with each other:

Honor the Victims

Next of Kin and those present and injured largely expressed a desire for something substantial: art, sculpture, inscribed names, or clear symbolism that honors the lives taken and those injured. Some found the trees in the first Port Clinton concept meaningful; others worried about impermanence, minimization, or the blocking of space.

"Those of us with PTSD would have a hard time in the Port Clinton space right in the middle of where the shooting chaos was."

Survey Respondent

"A change of trees and flowers is a slap in the face of all the families and survivors that want something meaningful there."

Tier 1 Listening Session Respondent

"Port Clinton should have a space for memory, reflection, and prayer."

Business in Proximity to Port Clinton

"This should have more benches where people can reflect."

Tier 1 Listening Session Respondent

"Keep it simple. I don't know if I find Port Clinton to be a reflective space anyway. Something should be there, but I don't know if it should be something grand."

Tier 1 Listening Session Respondent

Honor the Community's Resilience

Port Clinton is the heart of the community. It was before the shooting, and still is today. Those who live, work, or patronize businesses in and around the plaza expressed a desire to honor its positive energy and everyday function. Preferred design elements included more seating, interactive features for all ages, and spaces that support daily gathering—after school, on weekends, and between errands.

"A way to remember the lost is to celebrate them while encouraging children to play and life to go on."

Survey Respondent

"The entire Port Clinton design and architecture feels cold and claustrophobic—like a prison."

Survey Respondent

"Speaking as a mom of two young children who were present at the shooting, a poor imagining of how to create a town center full of life and love."

Survey Respondent

"I don't want to remember the shooting every time I go to Port Clinton."

Business in proximity to Port Clinton

"I was actually once told that the best way to rid bad memories is children's laughter. That, plus community, is how we've chosen to rise above as a family and as a business... I have slowly started to feel that spirit returning. New young families who moved here after 2022 visit our store or come to the square so the kids can run around while the parents sit and talk. People are rediscovering DTHP [Downtown Highland Park] as a place to simply exist together again."

Business in proximity to Port Clinton

Of the people we spoke to on Port Clinton, about 50% expressed a strong perspective on the designs at Port Clinton. However, in about 15% of conversations, the future of Port Clinton was a sole motivator for their participation in this phase of engagement. This is consistent with feedback obtained during the Location Feedback Survey and public engagement process, and indicative of the core difference in perspective between next of kin and individuals who were injured and the community at large, including those present and not injured.

Three distinct perspectives emerge:

More prominent (37%). These respondents—many of whom are next of kin, individuals present and injured, individuals present during the shooting (57%), connected to victims or survivors—feel all three Port Clinton designs are inadequate. This group felt the current concepts were inadequate, using strong language to express their disagreement, and calling for sculpture, art, permanent markers, and explicit acknowledgment at the location where the shooting happened.

Keep it subtle (42%). This perspective feels Port Clinton is too active and commercially busy to function as a true memorial, and that a subtle bench, trees, or low-key acknowledgment is the right calibration—enough to honor without overwhelming the space. Individuals with this perspective identify as present during the shooting, live or work next to Port Clinton, or are broader members of the community (81%).

Exclude it entirely (18%). This perspective is entirely composed of community members (100%), with no one identifying as next of kin or as directly injured. Some argue Port Clinton should not be part of the project at all, framing a memorial there as a monument to a violent act rather than to the community. Several expressed that Port Clinton no longer feels like itself and that more should be done to revitalize the heart of downtown.

The key finding is that the strongest calls for *something more prominent* at Port Clinton came from those closest to the tragedy, while the preference for *excluding* Port Clinton came from general community members. The *Keep It Subtle* group was the most diverse in composition but skewed toward community members without direct impact.

Design Feedback

While there is no consensus, positive feedback for the design included the following:

- **Tying the Port Clinton design back to the Rose Garden** through a shared material, motif, or recurring element
- **Creating a third space** where people and children can gather, businesses can thrive, and the community can connect
- **Using art and sculpture that speak to the community's resilience** rather than the shooting itself
- **Considering maintenance and usage protocols** for any interactive elements

Next Steps

Feedback on Port Clinton reflected a lack of consensus on the secondary site from those most directly impacted and the broader community. Because the majority of stakeholders shared that the designs did not resonate with them, the City is considering an alternate approach.

Conversations on Port Clinton will continue at the Committee of the Whole Meeting on Monday, June 8, 2026.

In Closing

Phase 2 of Design Concept Review produced a clear result for the Rose Garden: Concept 1, Woven Together, carries the strongest support across all groups and engagement types. Woven Together's nature-based design, seven niches for private reflection, and capacity to accommodate both private grief and communal gatherings closely align with what the community asked for in Phase 1 and confirmed in Phase 2. Port Clinton had no such consensus, and the City will pursue an alternate approach in that space.

This community has been generous with its trust. Every voice contributed to shaping what comes next.

For more information, visit hpremembrance.org
or contact remembrance@cityhpil.com