



memo san diego

to **City of Westmorland**
from **Diana Gonzalez, Tessa Hocquet**
re **Honey Festival Summary**
date **01/21/26**

This Project is funded and managed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) with Regional Early Action Program 2021 grant funding from the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development.

Westmorland Downtown Overlay Community Engagement Event #1: Honey Festival Pop-Up

Location: Westmorland City Park

Date: January 17, 2026

As part of the Downtown Overlay Zoning project, the City of Westmorland hosted a pop-up booth at the Honey Festival to introduce the project and begin early community engagement. The Westmorland Honey Festival is an annual community festival and honey production traditions. It is organized by the Imperial Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce.

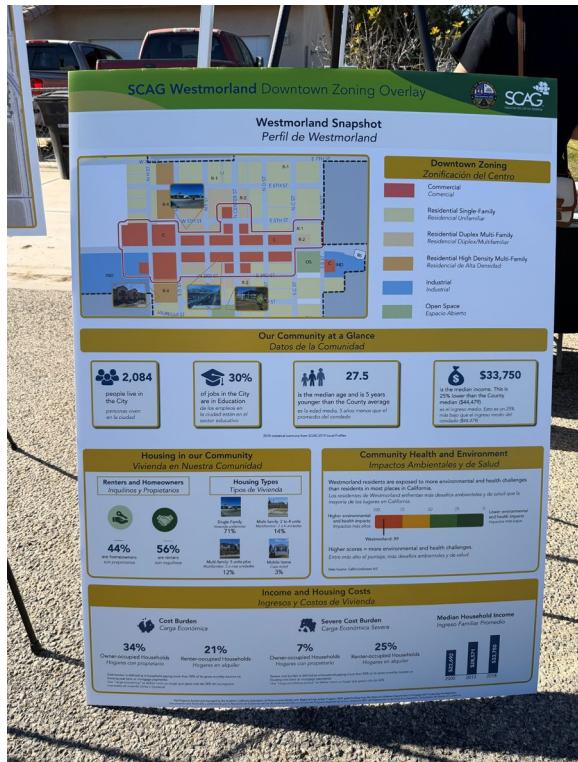
The Downtown Overlay Zoning booth was staffed by two members of the City's consultant team, MIG. The intent of the booth was to explain the purpose of the project, how it connects to broader community needs in Westmorland, and build awareness and trust by showing that community input will directly inform the work ahead.

Content/Activities

The booth featured three bilingual (English/Spanish) display boards designed to inform participants and encourage feedback. The first board, *Westmorland Today*, introduced the project and provided background information, helping participants understand the context and community goals before sharing their input.



The second board presented a snapshot of local demographics and existing conditions, including how land is currently developed and zoned. The third board focused on Downtown needs and invited participants to share their priorities for future Downtown development by “voting,” using dot stickers and sticky notes, on desired land uses and amenities.



Together, the displays and conversations with City representatives and the consultant team created a low-barrier, accessible opportunity for residents to learn about the project and share their lived experiences related to housing, mobility, and Downtown needs. The input gathered will complement technical analysis and inform next steps in the project. Larger versions of the board are included at the end of this summary.

Activity Summary

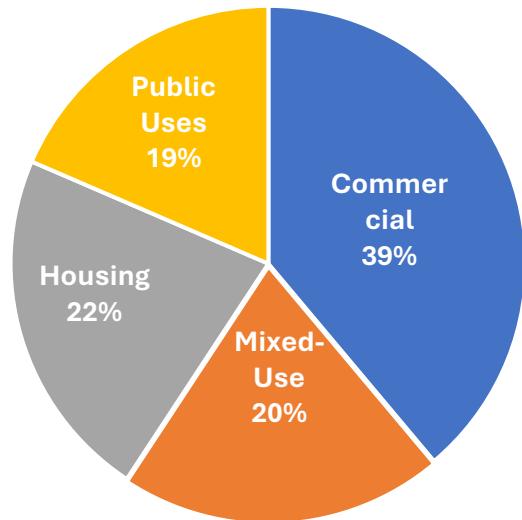
During the pop-up event, approximately 75 community members stopped by the booth and provided feedback. Most participants were Westmorland residents, while others had ties to the community through family—having grown up in the City—or general familiarity with the area. Not everyone completed the activities, but many still stopped to share comments and perspectives on what they feel Downtown needs.



Land Use

Participants indicated that a variety of uses are needed Downtown; however, commercial uses received the highest number of votes by a wide margin. In conversations, many residents emphasized the need for local, everyday commercial options. Several noted they currently travel outside the City for most services and shopping needs. A recurring theme was interest in businesses that serve drive-through traffic or offer convenience for residents, such as fast-food restaurants. Participants pointed out the absence of chain restaurants or drive-through options on Main Street. Some mentioned a desire for more sit-down places (restaurants, coffee shops, ice cream shops, etc.) to spend time with friends and family beyond only “take-out” options. Others mentioned a need for personal services uses, including medical offices and pharmacies, and recreational opportunities such as a movie theater, bowling alley, trampoline park, and water park/sprayground. Participants repeatedly noted a need for activities/places for youth. Public uses identified included a community center, senior center, library, and parks.

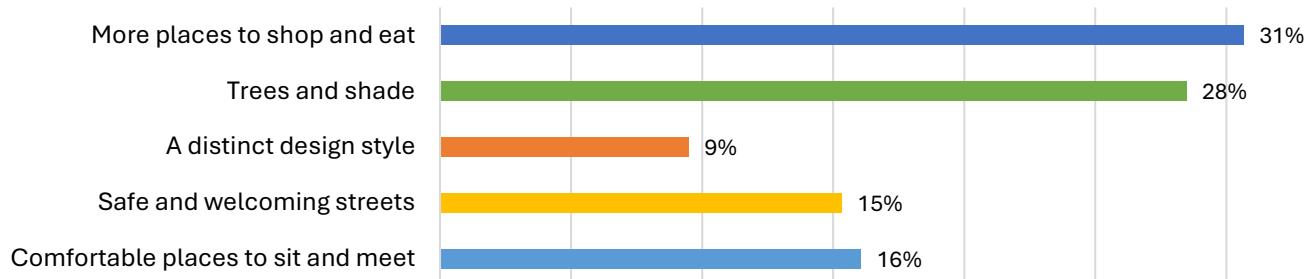
What type of uses would you like to see in Downtown?



Downtown Character

Consistent with the land use feedback and both verbal and written comments, additional places to shop and eat were identified as the top priority for Downtown. Trees and shade also received a high number of votes, reflecting concerns about extreme summer heat. Comfortable places to sit and gather, along with safe and welcoming streets, ranked next. While participants noted that a distinct design style or theme would be a positive addition, it received the fewest votes when compared to other priorities.

Vote for the features that matter most for future Downtown development.



Key Takeaways

Overall, feedback from the pop-up event suggests that the current **underdeveloped condition** of Downtown shapes how residents think about priorities. Many participants focused on very **basic, everyday needs**—such as places to buy groceries, pick up a fast meal, or simply spend time sitting and relaxing in a comfortable environment. The desire for **convenience, shade, and welcoming places** to gather reflects a Downtown that is seen less as a destination today and more as an area that first needs foundational services and amenities.

While housing was consistently identified as a major community need, Downtown was generally not viewed as the most appropriate location for new housing at this time. This appears to be influenced by the perception that other needs, particularly commercial services, dining options, and public gathering spaces, are more immediate and critical. Several commenters suggested that once Downtown is more fully developed and active, housing could become a more realistic and attractive addition in the future.

In terms of housing preferences, participants overwhelmingly expressed support for **ownership housing**. There was notable concern about multifamily housing, largely tied to negative perceptions about the potential quality or long-term condition of such development. At the same time, participants acknowledged the need for **more affordable housing options**, particularly those that are attainable without reliance on subsidized programs such as Section 8 or Housing Choice Vouchers.