

Yates Township Community Listening Session, Summary of Input

On August 10, 2026, Yates Township and WMSRDC hosted a community listening session to gather resident input to inform the development of the Township’s Master Plan. The session was promoted community-wide and was open to anyone interested in sharing their ideas about the future of Yates Township and Idlewild.

Approximately 45 - 50 people participated in the session. A consistent theme throughout the discussion was the desire to invest in Yates Township while preserving the qualities that make the community special. Residents expressed interest in new investment, businesses, recreation, housing, and improvements to community spaces, while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining the community's small, peaceful, and distinctive character. Participants also spoke about the cultural and historical significance of the Idlewild name and the opportunities to build on the recognition and identity as the community plans for its future.

Following the listening session, leadership of Yates Township expressed interest in hosting a virtual listening session to provide another opportunity for input, particularly for seasonal residents and residents who may have difficulty leaving their homes to participate.

The input from this session is summarized below in four categories:

- 1. Opportunities identified for growth and investment
- 2. Approaches to managing and guiding growth
- 3. Considerations for preservation
- 4. Community priorities for balancing growth and preservation

Opportunities that residents identified for growth	• Improve the downtown gateway from US-10. Residents emphasized the importance of beautifying the downtown corridor. Ideas included improved landscaping, lighting, signage, pedestrian amenities, renovation of existing buildings, new spaces for small businesses, and a potential welcome center. • Develop a stronger business corridor. Residents suggested creating a business corridor extending from US-10/Broadway to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, with the long-term goal of connecting to the Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center. • Revitalize the rail-trail. Residents identified improvements to the existing rail-trail as an opportunity. • Create a multi-use community space. Participants expressed interest in a space, often discussing this in connection with rehabilitating and reopening the Flamingo. • Expand housing options. Residents discussed opportunities for additional housing, including the possibility of a tiny home community development. • Expand recreation and visitor amenities. Ideas included walking and biking paths connecting important cornerstones of the community, as well as a campground or designated RV park to provide additional opportunities for residents and visitors. Revitalize Williams Island. Residents identified Williams Island as an important recreational and community asset. Suggested improvements included a covered gathering area, designated parking, a boat-washing station, improved landscaping and signage, and additional gathering spaces.
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Structuring community growth	• Consider incorporating Idlewild as a city or village. • Build partnerships to support economic development. Identify midsize to large organizations that would be a good fit for the Yates Township community. • Consider creating an HOA. Residents suggested an HOA as a way to help keep Idlewild calm. • Create a historic district. Several residents highlighted the importance of a historic district to preserve historic architecture and sites over time, including Williams Island, the firehouse, and the library. • Consider creating a Downtown Development Authority. Residents identified a DDA as a potential way to support growth and preservation of the downtown area. • Create designated spaces for camping and biking. • Establish requirements for watercraft registration and lake access. Residents expressed support for a Township policy requiring watercraft registration before entering the lake, along with requirements related to safety, identification, and lake access. • Enforce the Township’s blight ordinance.
Important considerations for preservation	• Preserve natural spaces. Residents emphasized that growth should not come at the expense of wooded areas or the natural shorelines of local lakes. • Consider noise when planning for development. Residents emphasized the importance of controlling noise as the community grows. • Limit public lake access from “ghost roads.” Residents suggested closing these roads to public lake access. • Preserve important community places. Locations identified included the library, the Flamingo, the firehouse, Little Idlewild Lake, El Morocco, Mrs. Lee John Store, and Chestnut Store. • Preserve indigenous plants. Residents specifically noted the importance of protecting indigenous plants in Idlewild, particularly south of 56th Street and Nelson. • Protect the community’s peace, natural beauty, and environmental quality. Residents identified water quality, air quality, and the peaceful and tranquil character of the community as important to preserve. • Protect and restore local lakes. Residents discussed improving water flow and drainage around Idlewild Lake to help reduce excess algae growth.
Community priorities when considering growth and preserving the rich historical and cultural history.	Preserve the history, culture, natural resources, peace, and community character. Revitalize areas that can support economic growth, including spaces for small businesses and opportunities for partnerships with larger businesses. Rehabilitate public and recreational spaces, such as Williams Island, to support tourism. Support existing businesses and local entrepreneurs such as Lee Johns, Peyton’s Bar and Grill, Healthy Kids. These businesses create an important foundation for future economic development. Connect businesses, neighborhoods, historic sites, recreation, and the lake to have a community where all of these components work together. Create new housing, trails, camping and RV opportunities, recreational opportunities, and visitor amenities.