



## **Overview**

As a follow up to community survey findings that indicated several areas of importance, the 1 October Memorial Committee identified a need for more in-depth inquiry into community expectations for a permanent memorial. Among the key survey findings was strong support for memorial to be located on the venue/event site. Upon learning of this finding, the committee worked with MGM and was granted some of the site space to be used for the memorial. To determine how the space should be used, focus groups were held to further refine ideas for key elements, which included elaborations on appealing to all ages, the ability to leave mementos, education and addressing mass casualty violence, an artistic feature, and the prospective name of the memorial.

## ***Participants***

Several specific stakeholder groups, as well as community member groups. Eight total focus groups were held: five in person which included two community member groups, a group for first responders/community health workers, and two groups of survivors (one specifically targeted those physically injured). Three were held virtually including families of those lost and two groups of primarily survivors.

Participants were recruited via email; the email list consisted of roughly 2300 community survey respondents who provided email addresses to be included in future engagement opportunities. To boost participation, committee members provided follow-up messaging and coordination within relevant stakeholder groups. Groups allowed for up to 14 registrations; actual attendance varied.

Participants were prepared for each focus group by first receiving an introduction with the overview of the committee's composition and purpose, status of current activities including the community survey, and purpose of the focus groups as the next stage in information gathering. Although participants were loosely guided from topic to topic, discussions were largely participant-driven after topic prompts. In some cases, ideas from previous groups were presented to collect reactions and additional ideas. Over the course of all groups, several themes emerged that often crossed over focus group topics. Findings are presented as a response to each topic, although the content was generated organically over the course of focus group conversations.

## **Focus Group Findings**

### ***Appeal to All Ages***

Seven in ten (70.6%) of the community survey respondents felt it was extremely or very important that the memorial appeal to all ages. When considering the importance of appealing to all ages, focus groups often offered suggestions about the use of space in terms of managing children's activity and offering accessibility to all visitors. Outdoor space was referenced in several cases, often suggesting that the landscaping should include trees, walking spaces, seating, shelter from the heat, and running water, if possible.

Appealing to the senses was also a recurring theme in references made to appeal and interaction for visitors. Specific examples included fragrant plants, sounds such as water or

music, and tactile or visual interactive options to displays and/or artistic features. These and places for quiet rest or reflection were also said to be helpful for visitors who may be overwhelmed and needing to rest and/or engage senses to ground and collect themselves.

### ***Mementos***

Having the ability to leave mementos to commemorate victims and survivors was extremely or very important to 57% of survey respondents. Given concerns about the manageability of mementos, focus groups often indicated that a controlled approach is best, allowing for no mementos or minimal mementos with careful management. One suggested that this could possibly be managed centrally through the memorial caretakers, such as placement of a pre-determined memento or activation of a specific indicator (such as a light) on special dates. As a possible alternative to tangible mementos, several groups indicated support for the use of technology for this element, such as a video board or some manner of online guest book.

Incorporation of pre-determined mementos into an artistic feature held some support across groups but note that it is important to consider that things are not unintentionally lost and possibly should be in a contained, prominently displayed area.

### ***Education***

Nearly 3 in 4 (73.1%) of all survey respondents rated education about the event as extremely or very important. More than six in ten (62.5%) indicated addressing the issue of mass casualty violence similarly. Storytelling emerged easily as a central theme or method by which education should be incorporated, according to focus groups. In doing so, participants hoped the memorial would educate about the event, victims and survivors, and the community response both during and after the event.

With regards to the event itself, participants regularly indicated that it was important to focus on magnitude of attendance and impact of the event. Groups agreed that it was important to address mass casualty violence in terms of the facts of the event and to avoid political controversy regarding gun control. If sensitive content is used to develop any portion of the education, some focus groups added that it would be helpful to label this with content warning and a way around the feature to avoid triggering trauma responses. Some suggested that the educational feature, particularly elements depicting the event, be located in an indoor portion of the memorial. Particularly in the first responders' focus group, it was suggested that education about the event could also include emergency first aid and management education, whether offered as part of special events or a permanent part of the memorial.

Education could also include the stories of victims and survivors. Participants indicated that it was important to acknowledge each of the 58 who were lost by providing greater details about their lives and personalities. Education about survivors was often referenced as being extremely important in addition to acknowledgement of those lost and could include their stories or messages they have for other survivors. Curating information and input from victims' families and survivors was considered as part of educating about those impacted. Several groups indicated strong support for the idea of using technology to present a multi-dimensional experience of biographies and stories.

Participants also felt it would be helpful to integrate education about mental health for the benefit of visitors, particularly survivors. Messaging that recognizes that mental issues are

common and need to be treated, the term “it’s okay to not be okay,” and references to resources all emerged as methods to address the issue.

### ***Artistic Feature***

More than half of survey respondents (60.1%) deemed an artistic feature extremely or very important. The use of nature or outdoor space was often central to discussions of the feature attraction. In one example that held a great deal of support in the first and subsequent groups, a storytelling walk that is experienced as a journey through parts of the memorial was suggested. Specifically, the participant indicated that the journey would touch on the community’s initial enthusiasm for the music festival, the tragedy through education about the event, and a healing or reflective space.

Several groups indicated interest in a possible link to music both in the visual design and in the experience if sound could be incorporated into the design. Several also suggested a feature of 58 similar items or some recognition of victims, while also acknowledging survivors.

Lights as a feature held a good deal of support across groups. Examples included using lights (or reflective pathway) made to look like water instead of water, lights to represent victims and survivors, or a feature video wall with rotating images/messages that are procured among survivors/families.

As an additional design consideration, a few groups mentioned that it may be beneficial to use landscaping or an architectural design feature to block sightlines to the hotel from the memorial grounds.

### ***Naming the Memorial***

Route 91 stands out as a location and reference to an annual gathering. Some consideration of location, date, and the event name are central to thoughts about naming; however, most agree that “1 October” was confusing naming and would not be an ideal identifier alone. The term “memorial” was frequently said to be sufficient to describe the area (not necessarily to include the terms “shooting” or “massacre”).