

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY FEB. 13 PERMANENT MEMORIAL COMMUNITY INPUT



National Charrette Institute  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

**May 31, 2024**

**FINAL SUMMARY REPORT**

## Introduction

In the wake of the tragic events that unfolded on February 13, 2023, Michigan State University established the Feb. 13 Memorial Planning Committee in October 2023. Composed of a cross-section of the university community, including members from the Associated Students of Michigan State University, the Council of Graduate Students, Department of African American and African Studies, School of Social Work, Student Life and Engagement, and the Office of the Provost, this sub-committee of the Public Art On Campus Committee has been at the forefront of engaging the broader MSU community to gather insights and input for the creation of a meaningful and lasting memorial on campus.

Supporting these efforts, the National Charrette Institute at Michigan State University played a pivotal role in enhancing collaborative capacities by facilitating community engagement activities. Further bolstering the committee's efforts, MSU's Trauma Services and Training Network provided essential counseling support to assist both the committee and public participants throughout this sensitive process. The committee initiated its outreach in January 2024, focusing first on private, trauma-informed engagements with those directly impacted by the tragedy. The insights garnered from these early discussions were critical, shaping a broader survey intended to capture a wider array of voices from the student body, faculty, alumni, and the local community. This survey, conducted in February, was a foundational element in crafting further engagement opportunities.

Building on the momentum from these initial phases, the Feb. 13 Memorial Planning Committee organized two significant engagement sessions in March 2024. The first, an in-person session on March 13 and 14, and the second, a virtual session on March 19 and 20, were designed to capture diverse perspectives across students, student groups, staff, and faculty, enriching the planning process with a multitude of viewpoints.

All input opportunities centered on three topics/questions:

1. What do you want the memorial to do for us now and in the future? What do you want the memorial to communicate?
2. What will we do at or in the memorial?
3. Where should the memorial be? Recognizing there are physical and environmental constraints on campus and that there would only be one memorial.

This report compiles and summarizes the ideas and thoughts received so the committee can review and process them, and develop a Call for Proposals to design, build, and install a memorial.

## Online Survey

The Feb. 13 Permanent Memorial Committee's effort to engage the Spartan community began with an online, 4-question survey distributed to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members. The survey was administered via the Qualtrics online survey platform and was launched on February 13, 2024, and closed on March 31, 2024.

The survey was distributed by QR code at the Feb. 13 Remembrance Gathering on MSU's campus initially and then by posters throughout MSU and East Lansing. MSU Communications sent out the survey link via the Deans/Directors/Chairs email listserv, an article in MSU Today and Inside MSU, as well as publicized it

on its social media platforms. A link to the survey was also placed on the Spartans Together website dedicated to information related to Feb. 13. Posters with the QR code were also made available during the community focus groups.

A total of 1,968 responses were received and the table and chart that follow delineate the breakdown by affiliation to MSU.

Affiliation to MSU	Number	Percent of Total
Student	937	48%
Faculty or staff	488	25%
Alum	410	21%
Community member	117	6%

## About the Memorial

**Memorial Purpose (rank choice)** What do you want the memorial to do for us now and in the future?

- Honoring and Remembering (74.2%)
- Providing Space for Reflection and Contemplation (8.1%)
- Healing and Processing Grief (7.5%)
- Community and Identity Building (6.2%)
- Educating (2.6%)
- Other (1.1%)
- Providing Commentary (0.3%)

Respondents were offered the opportunity to select “other” and leave text comments. A total of 48 comments were received. Comments focused on a desire for the memorial to offer a reflective space to acknowledge the lives taken, wounded, and impacted; recognize the community that was built from the event; improve safety, health and wellbeing, particularly mental wellbeing; and inspire positive action and change and encourage forward movement while remembering and honoring others.

**Memorial Interaction (rank choice)** In addition to remembering lives lost and individuals impacted, what will we do at or in the memorial?

- Reflect (33.7%)
- Experience individually (24.8%)
- Gather in community (24.0%)
- Participate (9.7%)
- Interact (7.2%)
- Other (0.6%)

Respondents were offered the opportunity to select “other” and leave text comments. A total of 14 comments were received. Comments focused on a desire for greenery and water features; political action; and honoring those impacted while encouraging movement forward.

**Memorial Location (single choice)** Where should the memorial be knowing that there are physical and environmental constraints?

- A natural, serene setting that offers a contemplative environment (52%)
- Central hub, near areas of activity and gathering (39%)

Respondents were offered the opportunity to select “other” and leave text comments. A total of 135 comments were received. Some respondents offered specific locations such as Beal Gardens, north of campus near Berkey and/or the Union, the Rock, at Sparty, the stadium, or Lansing. Others offered more general considerations such as near water, a garden, etc. or described more of the purpose or interaction desired. Some would like to see both a central hub and a natural serene setting.

## **Other**

At the end of the survey, respondents were offered an opportunity to share other thoughts related to the memorial. There were 307 comments received that were themed. Some were not germane to the memorial, the remaining comments echoed those in the sections above.

## Focus Groups

The Office for Resource and Support Coordination (ORSC) engages regularly with the directly impacted individuals and provided outreach to these groups for input into permanent memorial planning. Any information received was passed directly to the committee to incorporate.

To date, input from all stakeholder groups was consistent, such that common themes emerged across all data. The committee is dedicated to honoring the memories of loved ones and supporting families by integrating their insights into decisions.

In March and April 2024, NCI held focus groups for the MSU community to provide input on the memorial. On March 13-14, 140 in-person, drop-in style focus groups were offered, accommodating 840 potential participants. These conversations, designed to start at the top of every hour, ranged from 30-60 minutes in length. The table below outlines the focus group times and locations.

DAY/DATE	TIMES	# of Focus Groups	LOCATIONS
Wednesday, March 13, 2024	1-4 pm 6-9 pm	76	Demonstration Hall on MSU's campus Hannah Community Center in East Lansing
Thursday, March 14, 2024	9 am-4 pm 6-9 pm	64	Demonstration Hall on MSU's campus Hannah Community Center in East Lansing

On March 19-20, 54 online focus groups using Zoom were offered, accommodating 648 potential participants. To manage logistics, registration for these focus groups were required. These conversations, spaced throughout the days, ranged from 30-60 minutes in length. The table below outlines the focus group timeslots.

DAY/DATE	TIMES	# of Focus Groups	LOCATION
Tuesday-Wednesday, March 19-20, 2024	9-10am 10:30-11:30am 12-1pm 1:30-2:30pm 3-4pm 6-7pm 8-9pm 9:30-10:30pm	54	Zoom Meeting

A limited amount of specialized in-person focus groups were offered to select groups:

- MSU Union Staff: April 9, 2024
- IPF staff: April 9, 10, & 18, 2024
- MSU Police/first responders: April 10, 2024
- MSU Berkey Faculty/Staff: April 10 & 23, 2024

For all focus groups, participants were provided a brief introduction to the purpose of the focus groups, the process they would engage in to provide input, and community agreements or guardrails for the discussions. Participants were then led in the conversation about the memorial by facilitators from NCI

MSU Extension, and MSU Human Resources. The table below provides the attendance numbers for each set of focus groups.

Date	Group	Mode	Participants
3/13-14	MSU community	In-person	19
3/19-20	MSU community	Online, Zoom	2
4/9	Union staff	In-person	12
4/9, 10, 18	IPF staff	In-person	18
4/9	MSU Police/first responders	In-person	3
April 10 & 26	MSU Berkey Faculty/Staff	In-person	1
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>55</b>

Key themes from these discussions are provided below.

## About the Memorial

### Honoring, Remembering, and Reflecting

Focus group participants spoke of a desire to honor and remember the lives taken, wounded, and impacted, as well as those who provided support on the day and beyond. Many discussed a preference for a contemplative, quiet, safe, protected, and uplifting space that was natural and included greenery, water features and other calming sensory experiences.

### Community and Identity Building

Focus group participants described the devastation that occurred to MSU and the surrounding communities because of the tragic event, as well as the unity and community that was built following it. This included the support from first responders across Michigan on Feb. 13; the volunteers and supporters (mental health, therapy animals, etc.) in the days and weeks that followed; and the many visitors offering flowers and mementos. Participants expressed a desire for the memorial to be a place to honor and build that sense of community.

### Providing Commentary

Many focus group participants expressed a desire for the narratives of the day and beyond to be told. This included telling the stories of the lives of those taken and wounded on that day; those impacted, particularly around mental health, and those who have supported those impacted; and first responders. Some spoke of a desire to hear about the process of the memorial development and the processing of mementos, while others spoke of a desired space to connect, learn, and share resources.

## Memorial Interaction

### Reflection

When thinking about what kind of interaction with the memorial was preferred, focus group participants spoke of a place where individuals could sit and reflect as well as a place where community could be experienced by gathering—offering both opportunities. Some thought of how the memorial would need to satisfy both immediate and future needs that may be different. For example, right now it may be about

peace, grieving and healing, but in the future, it could be about providing a mental health break, general healing, serenity, self-care, and be a place to destress and reconnect. Participants expressed a desire for a supporting and uplifting space.

### **Honoring and Remembering**

Many expressed an interest in something to represent or identify the three individuals taken—a favorite color, flower, hobby, or passion—to remember and honor them. There was also interest in telling the stories of those injured as well as the first responders and broader community support that was offered in the days and weeks that followed. Some noted that this could be done through a digital narrative that is referenced on site.

### **Movement**

Some focus group participants expressed a desire for movement in the space as both a grounding activity and as a symbolic representation of how life always moves forward.

### **Natural Features**

In almost all focus groups, participants discussed preferences for natural features such as gardens, water, trees, and elevation. Some pointed out the need for a memorial for all four seasons and the maintenance to upkeep it. Some offered that a community clean-up day could be possible.

### **Community Engagement**

Many spoke of a desire to balance individual contemplation with gathering spaces. Some would like a space to sit and journal or study and that allowed for informal interaction. An outdoor classroom was offered.

### **Accessible and Inclusive**

In nearly all focus groups, participants spoke of the importance for all people of all abilities to be able to experience and enjoy it. Other components of this included safety and night lighting, sensory sensitivity, multi-generational opportunities, easily accessible by pathways and parking, and for it be weatherproof.

### **Other**

Other comments centered on the desire for the memorial to match the scale of the event, the quality of materials used, and maintenance.

### **Memorial Location**

Focus group participants shared many of the same location comments as survey respondents. Some offered specific locations such as at Sparty, near the Red Cedar River (without the memorial flooding) north of campus near Berkey and/or the Union. Others offered more general considerations such as near water, a garden, green or natural space, accessible, etc. or described more of the purpose or interaction desired. Some would like to see both a central hub and a natural serene setting.

Many discussed the balance of a desire for it to be in a prominent, visible location without activating people. Many also discussed a desire for it to be a dedicated, unique, and new space on campus, not repurposing or blending it with something else. Additionally, they wanted visitors to *know* they were in the space, not something that they necessarily happened upon and didn't know what it was.