



ENGAGEWINONA



Hopes, dreams - and actions - for Winona's sustainable future



Presented June 2021



CITY OF WINONA SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

CONTENTS

Project summary, strategies & next steps

- 3 — Introduction letter**
- 5 — Project summary**
- 8 — Top strategies and next steps**

Full report

- 13 — Defining, rating sustainability**
- 22 — Engagement in core topic areas**
 - 26 — Water**
 - 29 — Natural areas management**
 - 32 — Food**
 - 35 — Energy**
 - 38 — Transportation**
 - 41 — Materials & waste**
- 43 — Other priorities & preparedness**

Appendices

- 46 — Business engagement**
- 49 — Favorite natural areas and accessibility**
- 51 — Sustainable behavior and outdoor activities**
- 55 — Participants + demographics**
- 58 — Project activities**

‘What does sustainability mean to you?’

(Separate document) — The full set of responses



Introduction letter

June 11, 2021

John Howard, sustainability and natural resources coordinator; Sustainability Plan Steering Committee; Steve Sarvi, city manager; Scott Sherman, mayor; and the Winona City Council

Dear all,

Public engagement for the city's first sustainability plan was designed to hear from broad, diverse cross-sections of the community about their hopes, dreams and visions for a sustainable future Winona. Throughout our engagement between February and May, we:

- Connected with more than 700 people and collected more than 3,000 unique comments
- Held more than 40 interviews and small-group gatherings with key stakeholders, including: business owners leaders; county, state and federal governmental bodies; sustainability and environmental organizations; preK-12 and higher education; nonprofits; grassroots community groups; and more
- Hosted public events and pop-up activities in public spaces that collectively drew more than 200 people
- Provided a digital survey that collected more than 500 responses
- Engaged unheard and marginalized voices using focused outreach
- Directly engaged the business community through multiple events and partnerships

The engagement was a big success. We heard diverse input from residents about how they defined sustainability, collected meaningful input and ideas on the six core plan areas - water, natural areas management, energy, food, transportation, and materials and waste - and heard concrete strategies, projects and visions for creating change, both on a community level and in collaboration with the city.

The full results of this work are included in this engagement report, sorted by sections, with special attention on the specific projects, ideas and strategies residents suggested.

This report is designed as a complement to the Center for Energy and Environment's technical analysis, benchmarking, goal-setting, data collection and related strategies to



define Winona’s sustainability baseline and set achievable future goals. We worked in close collaboration with CEE and John Howard, the city’s natural resources and sustainability coordinator, throughout this project.

The report is also designed to nest within the larger comprehensive plan engagement coming later this year and 2022; many of the ideas, themes and input contained here both stand on their own and intersect with other key areas, especially as residents began exploring issues of equity, economic resiliency, and community values underlying city decision-making.

We hope this report does not mark the end of community engagement on these issues. We’ve provided a range of accessible strategies and pathways for the city and community to continue working together on sustainability goals and issues, as well as recommendations for the city to more strongly support collaborative efforts, ranging from the work of community groups to the strategic initiatives of large organizations and institutions. Engage Winona will continue to be available to talk through ideas, strategies, next steps and solutions - that’s our commitment to every contract, and to Winona as a nonprofit founded to serve this community.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the City of Winona in ensuring the community’s voices are heard, represented and supported in this very first sustainability plan. The city is a critical partner, and we have long seen our role as deeply complementary to the city’s desire to engage residents. Thank you for the ongoing investment the city is making in Engage Winona’s mission-driven work around civic engagement and community problem-solving, and in our commitment to driving equitable civic action and social change by working to ensure everyone has access, voice and power in community planning, decision-making and changemaking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Voerding'.

Brian Voerding

Executive Director, Engage Winona

brian@engagewinona.org | 507-450-7307



Project summary

Top strategies & next steps

Introduction

Engage Winona led community-wide engagement between February and May 2021 to frame the foundation and future action for the city's first sustainability plan. Our process served as the complement to the Center For Energy and Environment's larger work of designing and producing the overall plan; providing technical analysis, benchmarking and goal-setting; integrating case studies and recommendations; and other work.

Our ultimate goals were to create a plan that 1) included the views, visions and ideas of a broadly diverse and representative cross-section of the Winona community; 2) resulted in the creation of themes, actions, policies and projects that are meaningful and achievable; and 3) produced findings that will be willingly co-owned and supported by participants and the community in ways that drive future engagement, ownership, and work.

Activities

Stakeholder conversations

Through nearly 50 small-group conversations, we collected more than 2,000 unique responses and insights from nearly 200 individuals representing a diverse cross-section of key stakeholders across community sectors, including business, government, nonprofit, education, healthcare, grassroots and community groups, and others.

Public events

We held a series of public events in large indoor and outdoor spaces throughout late April and all of May, working to be responsive to COVID safety. We collected more than 500 comments and input from more than 200 individuals through activities and brief conversations at multiple locations around Winona.

Digital survey

We launched and marketed a digital survey between mid-March and the end of May and received more than 520 responses. The survey was more comprehensive than



much of our previous work, with an intent to capture the kind of broad and deep input that we were limited by COVID in gathering through in-person events.

Targeted engagement

We provided a combination of conversations and surveys to specific groups and populations, with a particular focus on business, preK-12 and higher education, and diverse and underrepresented voices.

Participants

We collect participant demographics primarily as a way to gauge whether our engagement broadly clears our ever-critical test of connecting with a diverse cross-section of community members. We were successful with this project in a number of ways - especially so given the constraints COVID placed on the work.

Here are some key demographic insights, representing everyone: survey respondents, participants in dozens of stakeholder conversations, participants in targeted outreach to specific communities, and participants in broad community events.

- **White-dominant but larger representation than city demographics:** About 85% white, 5-6% Black, 2-3% Indigenous, 2-3% Hispanic or Latino, 2-3% Asian (including Hmong)
- **Representation of younger voices** - 30% younger than 30, 50% younger than 40
- **Great balance of time lived in Winona** - 44% 10 years or less, 55% 10 or more
- **Household income generally aligned with city demographics**, with the largest participant group reporting between \$50,000-\$100,000.
- **Education levels skewed toward the highly educated**, with more than 60% holding some level of college degree
- **About 35-40% have children in the home**

What's in the full report

We really encourage all readers to spend the most time with the top strategies and next steps section immediately below. Beyond that, the full report includes these sections:

Defining & rating sustainability

- Importance of sustainability to the community
- Importance of seeing the city, community takes steps toward sustainability
- Responses to the plans' pillars - equitable outcomes, economic resiliency, climate action
- Responses to the prompt "What does sustainability mean to you?"



Engagement by plan topic area

1. Water
2. Natural areas management
3. Food
4. Energy
5. Transportation
6. Materials and waste

Other priorities and preparedness

- How prepared residents believe the city is to take on these issues
- Responses to how residents see the role of city government, the business community, other stakeholders in sustainability efforts

Appendixes

- 1. Business engagement**
 - a. Current sustainable practices and goals
 - b. Needs for resources, support from city
- 2. Favorite natural areas and accessibility**
 - a. Favorite public spaces
 - b. Input on access
- 3. Sustainable behavior and outdoor activities**
 - a. What residents do, what they would be interested in with support
- 4. Participants**
- 5. Project activities**

‘What does sustainability mean to you?’

We created a separate appendix with the full set of community responses to one of the project’s main prompts: “What does sustainability mean to you?” (and often revised in different contexts - “mean to your family, your organization, your business, etc.”)

The responses are rich, diverse, and speak to how the general community understands the word sustainability and the issues that surround it, as well as how engaged they are in sustainability issues and the energy around creating change.



Top strategies & next steps

Overview

This section is a collection of top strategies and next steps for the city as it moves forward with sustainability work. Many are explained in further detail in various sections of this report - the goal here is to have the action steps collected right in the executive summary.

These ideas were generated directly by the community through the engagement process - what's included here are ideas and strategies that were the most discussed, and feel most meaningful and achievable for the city.

They're sorted in two ways - by general theme, and by core plan topic area. Many require city involvement and investment, especially as a catalyst, but are rich with possibilities for community collaboration and sustained action.

1. The sustainability coordinator's role

A large part of engagement focused on the city's role, and the sustainability coordinator's role in particular, as serving as a go-to connection point, convener, resource provider, storyteller, and cheerleader for sustainability efforts.

The overwhelming community vision was for a position that supports existing work, brings stakeholders and groups together, tells and celebrates success stories, finds and delivers resources and education, and coordinates volunteerism and other community efforts.

This isn't a critique of the existing position, and likely many of these activities are already happening at different levels; it's simply the vision expressed by the community. Some of these strategies point to the value of staff support, like the GreenStep Cities program.

A. Community partnership designer

- **City as convener, issue leader:** Bringing together stakeholder groups on specific issues - like climate change action
- **Building networks + connections:** Among residents, city, business leaders, etc.
- **Business resource:** Staying closely connected with the business community, offering support and resources, bringing businesses with similar needs together



- **Backbone support:** For citizen, grassroots efforts - assist with needed resources, technical assistance, city approval for activities

B. Community educator

- Storytelling and communication around sustainability, success stories
- Produce set of materials on sustainability best practices, share around community
- Coordinate free workshops at city sites and natural areas

C. Engaging youth, college students

- Serve as a go-to connection point for higher ed and professors seeking ways to engage classrooms in community learning
- Coordinate, promote volunteer opportunities for youth
 - Focus impact projects

D. Resource and support hub

- Regularly collect and share information on incentive programs, rebates, etc. (big ask from the business community)
- Seek and co-write grant for grassroots projects with city benefit, and find other support for community organizations
- Coordinating reuse hub (business raw materials, community goods)

2. City policies + practices

A. Infrastructure

- **Expand, grow community gardens:** This was the overall number-one community request - more community gardens in more places across the city
- **Support for expansion of EV charging stations** (suggestions - Levee Park, Lake Park Lodge)
- **Better bicycle, pedestrian signage:** Consider creating citywide linked trail, widespread and consistent use of destination and wayfinding markers

B. Policies

- **Explicit support for reimagining residential lawns** - native plantings, growing food, boulevard plantings, and other approaches
- **Ways of more strongly encouraging and supporting commercial/industrial design:** Landscaping, runoff, other exterior issues



C. Development

- **Development checklist:** Integrated list of questions that incorporate environmental standards and practices into every review, application and process - not as a regulatory burden, but largely as a best practices checklist and way to educate/encourage developers
- **Directly address continued pressure on bluffland:** Review, consider renewed community input on sensitive land and bluff development ordinances, provide clarity from a policy and political (council, planning commission) standpoint
- **Energy standards:** Tell success stories, have resources ready, work with landlords on rentals, and other practices to upgrade energy efficiency

D. Natural areas management

- **Continue work on trail development:** Lots of enthusiasm and support for the ongoing work on the Bluffs Traverse trail, and the other renewed attention on trails
- **Master plans and inventories:** Develop for all natural areas, but especially and first for Prairie Island - map the natural resources, develop an intentional plan, and work with local experts

E. Lead from within

- **Create examples:** Convert unused green space (Lake Park, other areas) to native plantings, pollinators, experimental sustainable practice projects, etc.
- **Demonstrate, showcase sustainability practices with all upcoming building proposals and work** - (East End Rec, Public Safety, Masonic)
- **Resolution, show of committed support** for concrete action on sustainability issues from official bodies (planning commission, city council)

F. Maintenance

- **Consistent landscaping + management:** Avoid planting non-natives, use tree mulching and pruning best practices, intentional non-mowing of sensitive areas
- Work to minimize winter salt application, seek new storage area not by the Mississippi

3. Incentivize behavior, culture change

A popular request of the city throughout the engagement process was to promote and incentivize behavior change, both for individuals and for businesses and organizations.



Residents pointed to the fact that there was no organization doing this on a community-wide scale, especially not with the reach of the city.

A. Digital dashboard

- Creation of a website page on the city's site tracking key city goals and progress on core topic areas - energy, water, natural areas management, etc. - and promoting success stories

B. Resourcing, supporting businesses

- Researching and sharing information on incentive programs, tax benefits, savings, and other bottom-line approaches to adopting sustainability practices

C. Residential lawn transformation program

- Launch a program with a clear step-by-step guide, and backed by city codes and practices, that champions and celebrates residents making the choice to turn sections or all of grass lawns into native plantings, gardens, pollinator-friendly landscapes, or other sustainable approaches. Ensure promotion focuses not just on lawns, but on the intended effect of improving Lake Winona's water quality and ecosystem.

D. Create a public showpiece

- Center projects, signage, education workshops, public events and general efforts on sustainable practices in one highly visible and well-trafficked public area, in order to generate broad awareness and demonstrate ways residents can get involved. Community recommendations generally centered on Lake Park, but there was also widespread support for Prairie Island and the Sugar Loaf area.

E. City of Winona Sustainability Awards

- Provide annual awards in focused categories (resident, business, partnership, volunteerism, community group) as a way of telling success stories, celebrating good work, and raising awareness - as well as positioning the city as a leader in championing sustainability efforts.



4. Internal structures

A. Engaged citizen-city group

- Determine the best structure for a citizen group - the Citizens Environmental Quality Committee or a newly imagined group. The group could be coordinated by the city, or community-driven with city support, and could be designed to support the goals and strategies produced from this plan.

B. Integrate sustainability coordinator's work

- **Deeper connections with park/rec:** The public's recommendation was to see a stronger influence of attention on natural resources and ecosystems on park/rec planning and projects, not just a focus on use.
- **Collaboration with maintenance:** Work closely on best practices, provide advice and resources for plantings, etc.



Defining, rating sustainability

Rating the importance of sustainability

Overview

A key frame for public engagement was hearing from residents how important sustainability was to them.

We first invited residents to rate how important sustainability was to them. We also asked how important it was to them to see the city take steps to become more sustainable, and how important it was for the city to protect existing natural resources.

And we invited residents to rate the importance of the plan's three main pillars:

- Equitable sustainability outcomes
- Economic resiliency
- Preparing for climate change/climate change mitigation

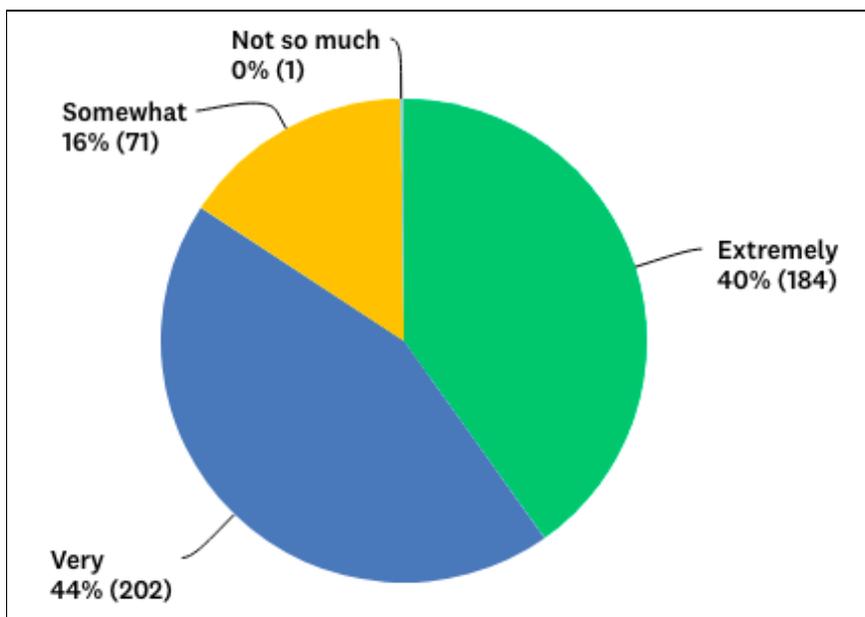
Analysis

Sustainability matters

Residents overwhelmingly said sustainability was important to them - 84 percent said extremely or very, and 98 percent said it was at least somewhat important.

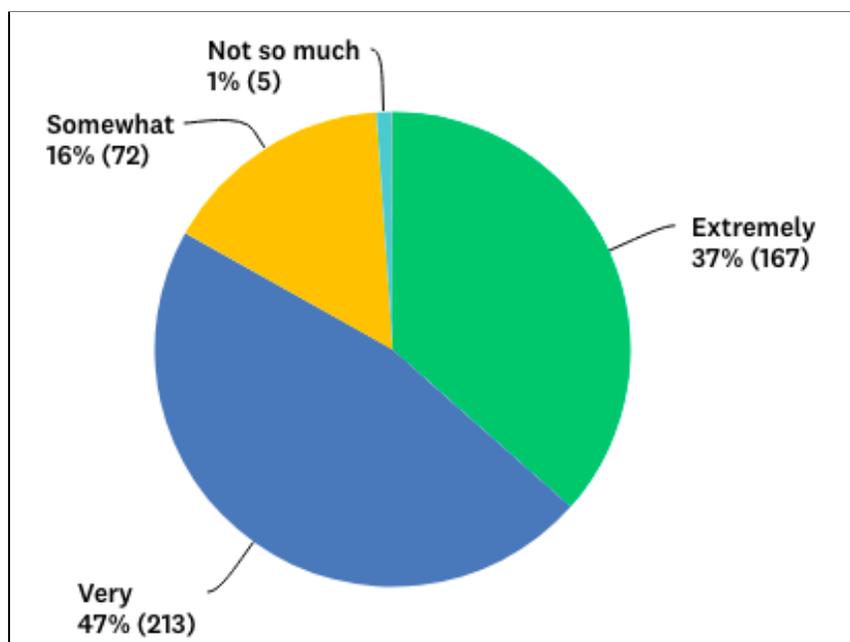


How important is sustainability to you?



These responses crossed demographic, social and cultural boundaries. They came not just from self-reported environmentalists and conservationists, but from folks who previously had little engagement with or knowledge of sustainability issues.

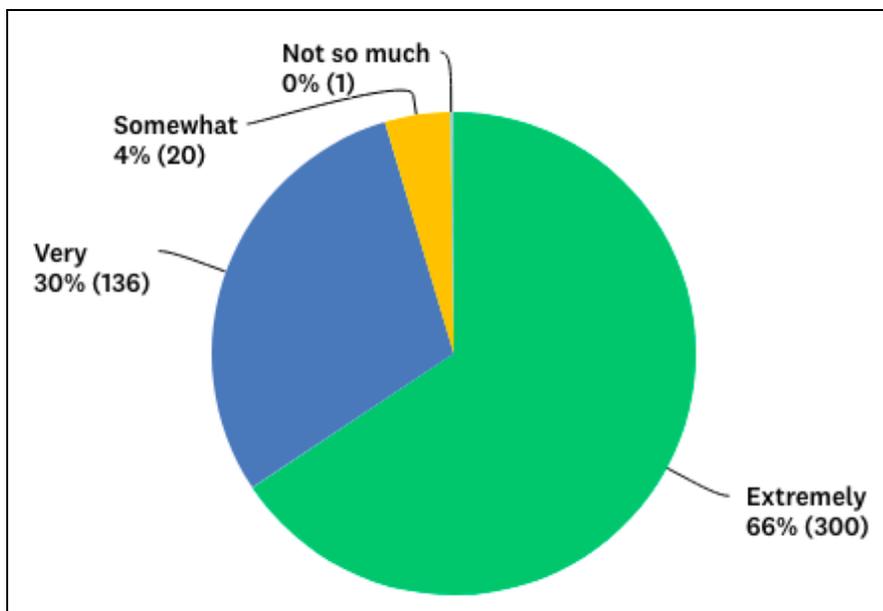
How important is it to you to see the City of Winona take steps to become more sustainable?





Residents also overwhelmingly said it was important for the City of Winona to take steps to become more sustainable - again at 84 percent saying extremely or very, and up to 98 percent saying at least somewhat. The strategies and ideas are broken down into the topic areas later in this report.

How important is it to protect Winona's natural resources for all to use and enjoy?



And residents similarly rated the importance of protecting Winona's natural resources for all to enjoy - up to 99 percent saying it was at least somewhat important.



What does sustainability mean to you?

Overview

Read the full set of responses

We chose to collect residents' responses in full in a separate document - "What does sustainability mean to you?" It's attached to this report.

We invited residents to provide their own definitions of sustainability - at public events, through creative outlets, in interviews, and within the survey.

We provided baselines and basic definitions when requested, but generally wanted to hear how they understood and perceived the word, and avoided using specific existing definitions or phrases.

Residents' responses to how they define sustainability are intended to complement and inform the definition of sustainability the city ultimately chooses to adopt.

Analysis

We received incredibly rich, creative, thoughtful and detailed responses from several hundred Winona residents.

In general, the responses focused on several interconnected themes:

- Preserving resources for future generations - only using what's needed
- The triple-bottom line approach of People - Planet - Profit
- Protecting natural resources - especially from development
- Seeing sustainability in a larger context that included affordable housing, fair wages, strong quality of life, and support for all residents
- The ability of Winona, as a local community and government, to contribute in meaningful ways to ensuring future generations have the same opportunities

Some residents reflected on their resistance to or distaste for the word. Some said it no longer felt useful and had been overused, politicized, or was too broad to have much definition. This included folks who have worked on sustainability efforts for decades in the



Winona area. Others saw it as a context for government to regulate residents and activities in ways they didn't support.

Generally, however, comments focused on what many described as the "textbook" definition or related iterations of sustainability, in meeting the needs of the present without compromising future generations' needs.

Selected comments

- Education is about finding a way to make sustainability meaningful to each person. People understand it intellectually but it doesn't affect them, so they don't care. You've got to make it mean something to them. Find a way to get them engaged. Because they want to. Finding that niche for each individual.
- For quite a few years in the circles I've run in, sustainability is a buzzword that people embrace but don't think about what it is.
- Sustainability is resource use without loss or degradation
- Sustainability is meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- I see sustainability as just and responsible practices that meet the community and environment's needs in the present without compromising the needs and abilities of future generations. It requires both systems thinking and ecological thinking that triangulate ecological value, economic value, and socially just practice.
- On the surface and at its root is sustain what you have. But I don't think any of us want to do that. So I stopped using the word. Maybe it's trying to create a future condition where the future condition is in balance ecologically and environmentally.
- I like to think of generations beyond me as deserving a good life, just like I have. Sustainability means that we sacrifice what we need to now, to be sure the kids that aren't even born yet have a chance at breathing clean air, not facing huge water bills, and able to enjoy the trails and wildlife just as I get to.
- Taking the steps to ensure that the planet we live on is a safe, healthy, and clean place for all to live, not just us in our small community while we're on earth.
- Sustainability to me means protecting my future children from the damaging poor decisions we are making today.
- Equitable distribution of resources to all
- Having a community that provides a clean, healthy and fun environment for everyone!
- Just another chance for more government control and bigger government, which we do not support.
- Our household sustainability goals are to reduce waste; produce and consume local food; and to repurpose materials when possible. We get our electricity from solar &



wind. We are trying to minimize chemical use on our property and are striving to maintain more opportunities for pollinators.

- In this civic context, positioning the town to be able to respond to the next crisis - and the next after that, since there will certainly be more--by building a level of functionality that does not deplete our resources or make it impossible for our people to thrive.
- Living off the land. Keeping equilibrium with what the land provides us.
- Sustainability means living symbiotically with our natural world rather than fighting against what nature wants from us, and fostering stewardship in every aspect of our community.
- WSU's definition of sustainability is - Social: We must all share the planet that we live on and take care of the other inhabitants of this world. Economic: We must live within our means rather than placing the burden onto others. Environmental: We must care for the world around us.
- Lately I've been thinking about sustainability as a circular economy. Where there's virtually no waste. And you're creating local jobs, using less energy to create what you need.
- It's a word that elicits a gut reaction in public and government arenas that implies some kind of environmental protection and policy.
- At Riverway we teach about sustainability, climate change, engaging students in nature and activities ... We sustain more than our environment. We sustain the mind, body and spirit of children. Looking at them as a whole person. We're sustaining the next generation to have healthy habits and be able to deal with their emotions in productive ways. It's all tied together.
- I like to think of generations beyond me as deserving a good life, just like I have. Sustainability means that we sacrifice what we need to now, to be sure the kids that aren't even born yet have a chance at breathing clean air, not facing huge water bills, and able to enjoy the trails and wildlife just as I get to.
- To live here in a beautiful and affordable town and keep it going for our future generations to enjoy and want to stay & raise their families in.
- Taking individual and collective responsibility to care for our homes, our neighborhoods, city, and world in a way that is regenerative and equitable for all.
- 自然经济社会的统一发展，又不损害后代人的长远利益 (Rough translation: "The unified development of natural economy and society does not harm the long-term interests of future generations")
- Sustainability is creating a future for both humans and our home planet. Knowing that the planet will continue without humanity. Humbleness in our place here. Respecting the fact that humanity cannot exist without a viable earth. Being humble to the fact that life is far larger than humankind yet having a loving, optimism for humanity.



Three pillars

Overview

Finally, we asked residents to rate the importance of the plan's three pillars: Equitable outcomes, economic resiliency, and preparing for/mitigating climate change. The graphics represent ranked survey responses; the comments came from surveys and conversations.

Analysis

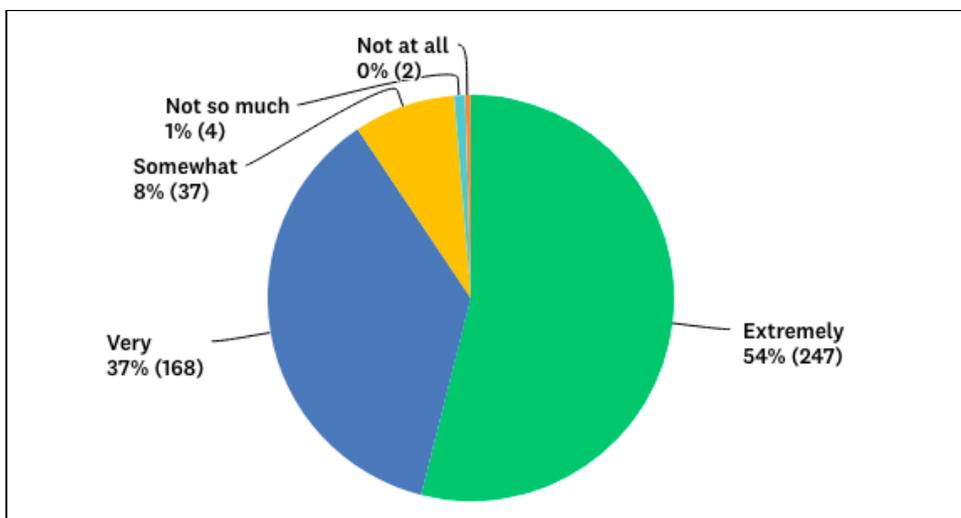
Responses to equitable outcomes and economic resiliency were both strong, and in particular residents rated economic resiliency as being of critical importance.

The responses to climate change preparation and mitigation were more mixed. Responses ranged from those who saw climate change as a severe threat but doubted the ability of one community to effectively respond to a global issue, to those who questioned the motivations of the city to address what they saw as politicized and less of a concern.

In many cases, residents asked for clearer definitions and concrete strategies related to the questions, which raises an opportunity for the city to provide this as part of ongoing work.

In interviews, we received some pushback on the idea of equitable sustainability outcomes. This was primarily related to focus - some participants expressed concerns that if the definition of sustainability expanded to related issues like wages, housing, social programs, racial justice, and others, it could make it difficult for the city to prioritize strategies focused on more traditional areas of sustainability like water, natural resources, energy, and food.

How important are equitable sustainability outcomes to you?

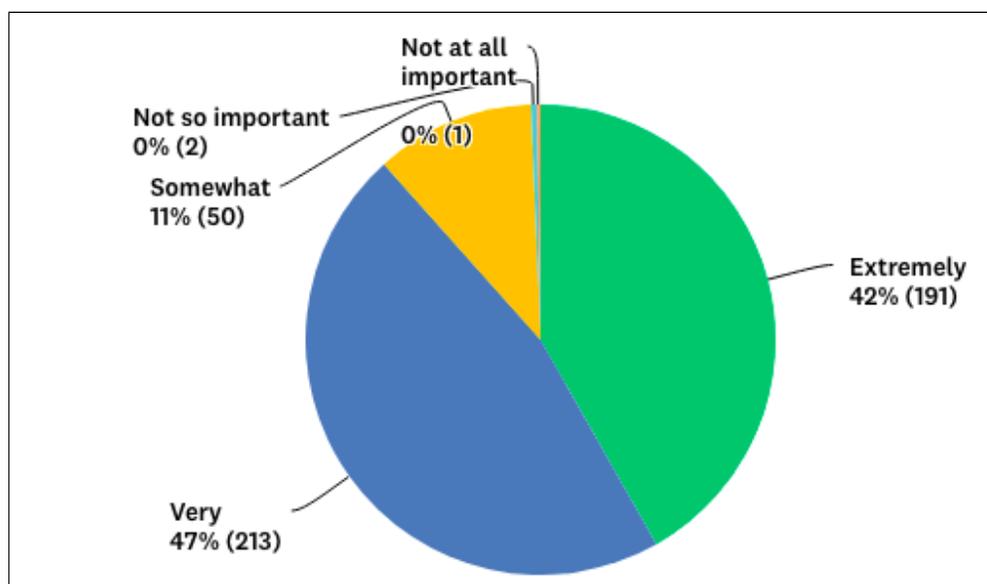




Comments

- A liveable wage is a foundation of being able to live sustainably. Without a livable wage a person can't pay attention to any of the other things that we talk about when we talk about sustainability.
- We want all changes to be equitable. Promoting EV technology just supports people who can afford electric cars.
- When we talk about climate change ... there's a huge social justice component.
- Equity is the bigger consideration in the infrastructure piece ... Ensure all community voices are being heard as we're deciding how to improve infrastructure. Not only are all being served, but being served in a way where their needs are met and they're listened to.

How important is economic resiliency to you?

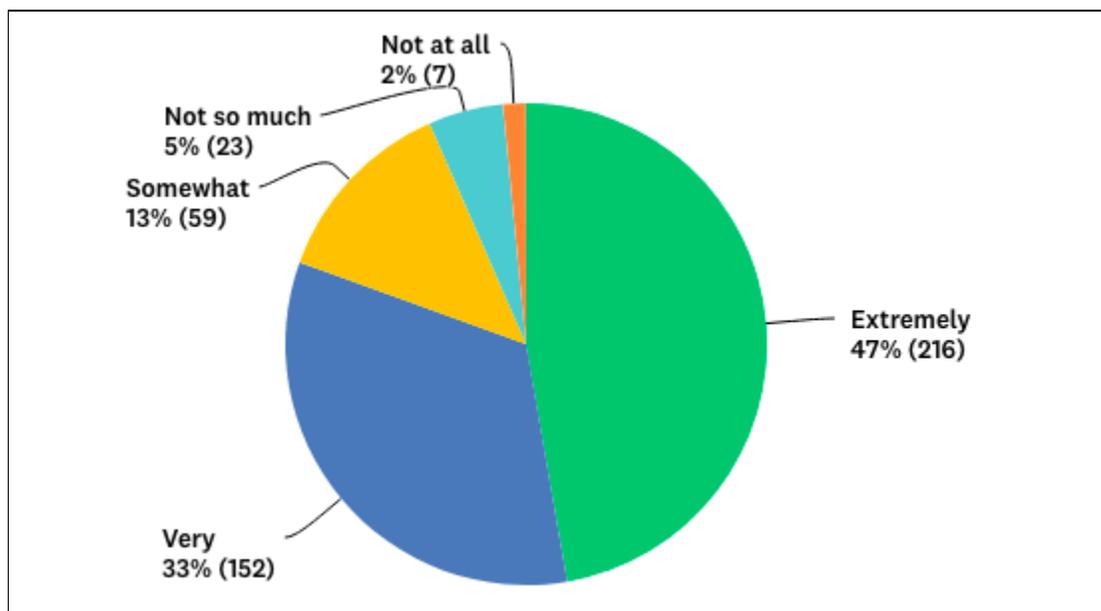


Comments

- Buy-in from the business community is crucial. Extreme weather events were going to hurt them and were already hurting them. They saw how addressing sustainability and climate change was in their own best interest.
- The city is doing lots of good work prioritizing the local economy, would love to see more of that.
- Green energy is cheaper. It's a bottom-line investment, not a feel-good one.



How important is it for our community to prepare for climate change?



Comments

- Let's think big and think audacious, big leap-frog steps sort of things - it's not enough to play catchup - we're past that phase. Can't spend our limited time and resources doing that.
- We're full-blown into global warming and in 20 to 30 years there's going to be hell to pay. People don't believe the science and won't accept it. The vast majority of the community doesn't understand that. They don't get how deep we're in it.
- We've had extensive flooding from climate change. We don't know the extent of what all that means. As far as our forests are concerned - it's very detrimental.
- We're eventually going to have to face the climate change issue. For us it'll be back to the original list. Issues with our forest. How do we plant trees that will survive 100 years from now as opposed to trees that are here now.
- We'll get to a level where we live with climate change many lifetimes into the future because of what we've created. The game is about sequestration.
- The public, when we talk about sustainability issues, they've gotten burned out and calloused. When we bring climate change into it, it's so big and so hard to get your hands around it, it really pushes a person - I can't deal with it, nothing I can do.
- City could become a real showpiece for carbon sequestration, where every citizen could take credit for the tons of carbon they pulled out of the atmosphere as citizens and as private landowners. We can take action over carbon sequestration.
- We're all going to be facing those changes. Big picture. Everything should be - wherever there are connections to be had with lowering carbon, carbon footprint, helping people understand and get behind.
- Things that have gotten worse are out of the city's control - climate change is happening. Invasives are moving in. They were problems then, worse problems now.
- It is very important for Winona to mitigate climate change - every community plays a role.



By topic

Overview

A core part of the engagement focused on input and ideas within the plan's six topic areas:

1. Water
2. Natural areas management
3. Food
4. Energy
5. Transportation
6. Materials & waste

The list above is numbered according to overall engagement. Responses to each topic are detailed below; each section includes:

- **Overview:** How the issue/topic was framed in public discussions and surveys.
- **Analysis:** Condensing, discussing the most common input and ideas for the topic.
- **Visions:** What folks want to change, with a focus on *meaningful* and *achievable* ideas: Ones that 1) have the most immediate relevance and significance and 2) have the strongest possibility of being accomplished.
- **Key comments:** A hand-selected collection of the most prominent and compelling comments from participants. Responses represent the true voices and language of participants and are selected to show diversity and range, not prevalence.

Analysis

Most engaged issues

1. Water
2. Natural areas management
3. Food



Least engaged issues

4. Waste and materials
5. Energy
6. Transportation

NOTE: This analysis is defined in two ways: By the number of comments and overall conversation and input, as well as residents' overall feelings about their ability to influence change.

Of the six topic areas, water and water quality stood out as the issue participants most wanted to discuss, and had the most concerns around.

Water was also the standout issue in the survey, with nearly 70% of respondents rating it as extremely important (compared to 30-50% rating of other topics at the same level). Input on water ranged from rivers, lakes and streams, to worries about future floods, to significant concerns about runoff from agriculture and bluffside developments, to the effects of residential lawn care on Lake Winona, and other issues.

Many conversations and input also focused on natural areas management - particularly the quality of and ability to use and access city public lands and outdoor spaces - as well as local food and agriculture, food networks and the economics of local food, and supporting residents in producing food.

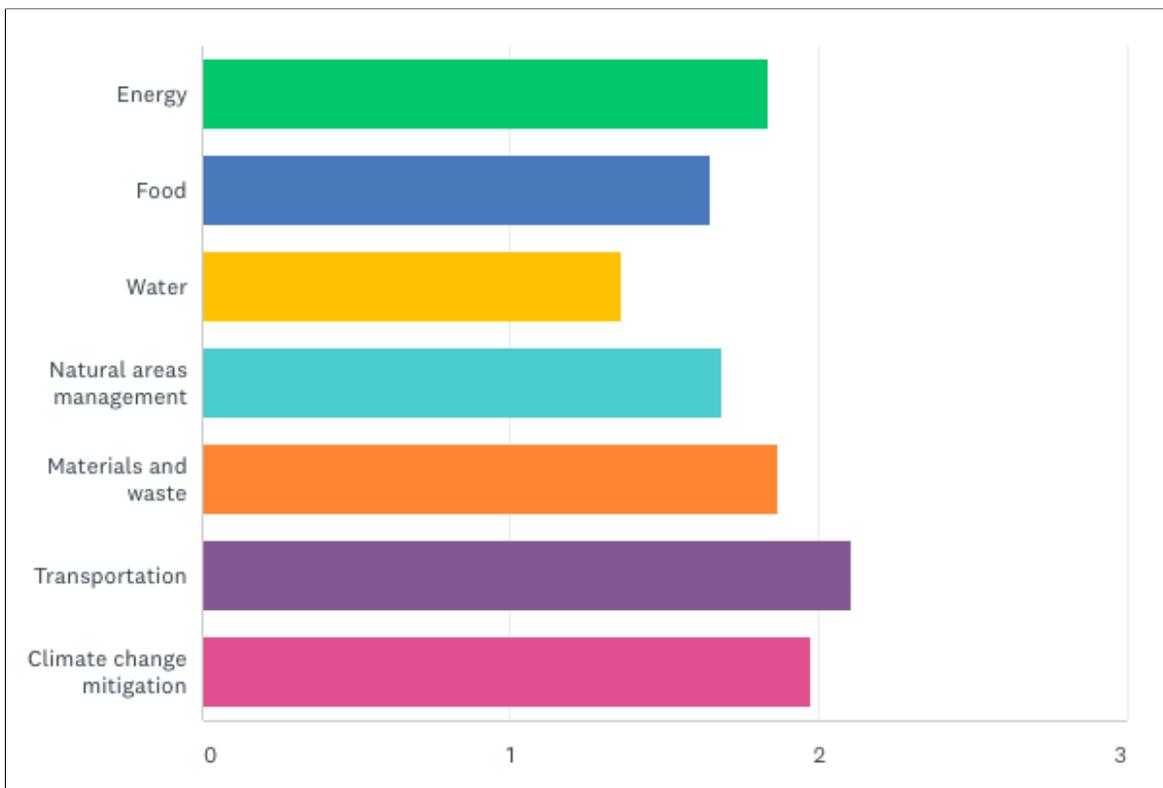
Generally, there was not one single topic area or project that stood out. Engagement was varied, diverse, and covered a lot of ground across all topics.

The lack of engagement in waste and materials and energy was largely due to participants either not having much understanding about the issue or not believing they had much ability to influence change.

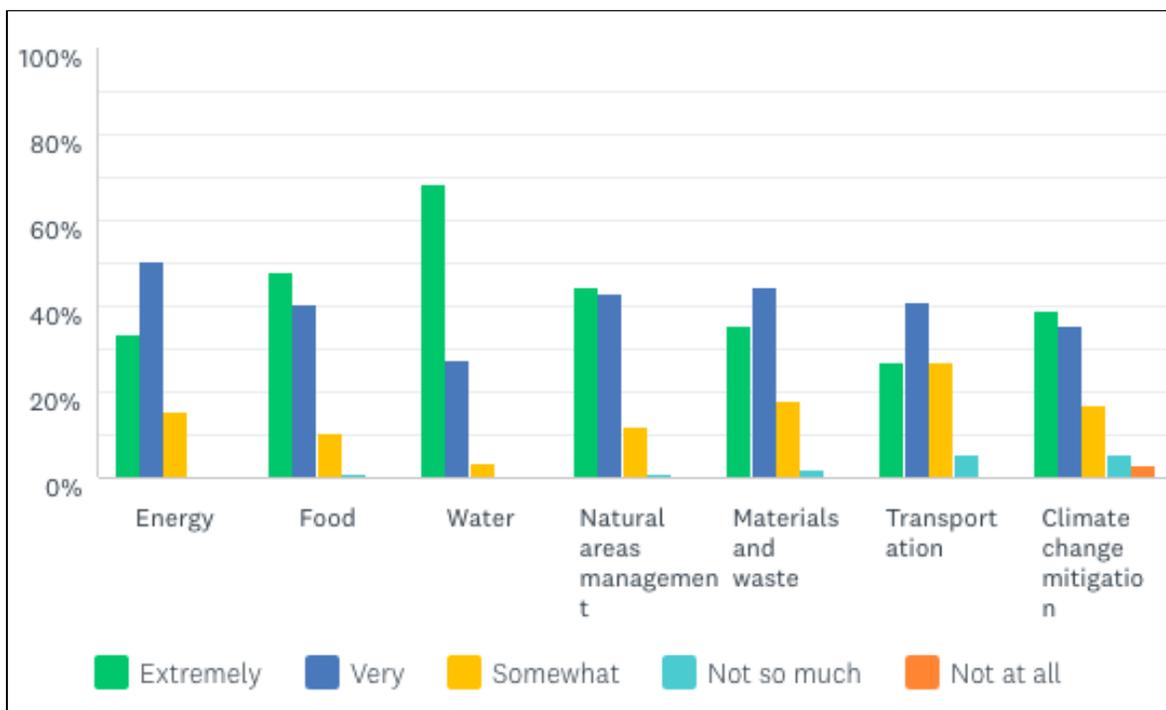
The biggest surprise was the lack of engagement and interest in transportation. This may be related simply to the timing of the engagement, coming a year into the pandemic. Other participants connected it to feeling powerless over recent city and state projects, including the City Council's rejection of grant funding to change Broadway from a four-lane to three-lane road, and the state's Mankato Avenue reconstruction including roundabouts.



Rate the importance of each of these sustainability topics to you:

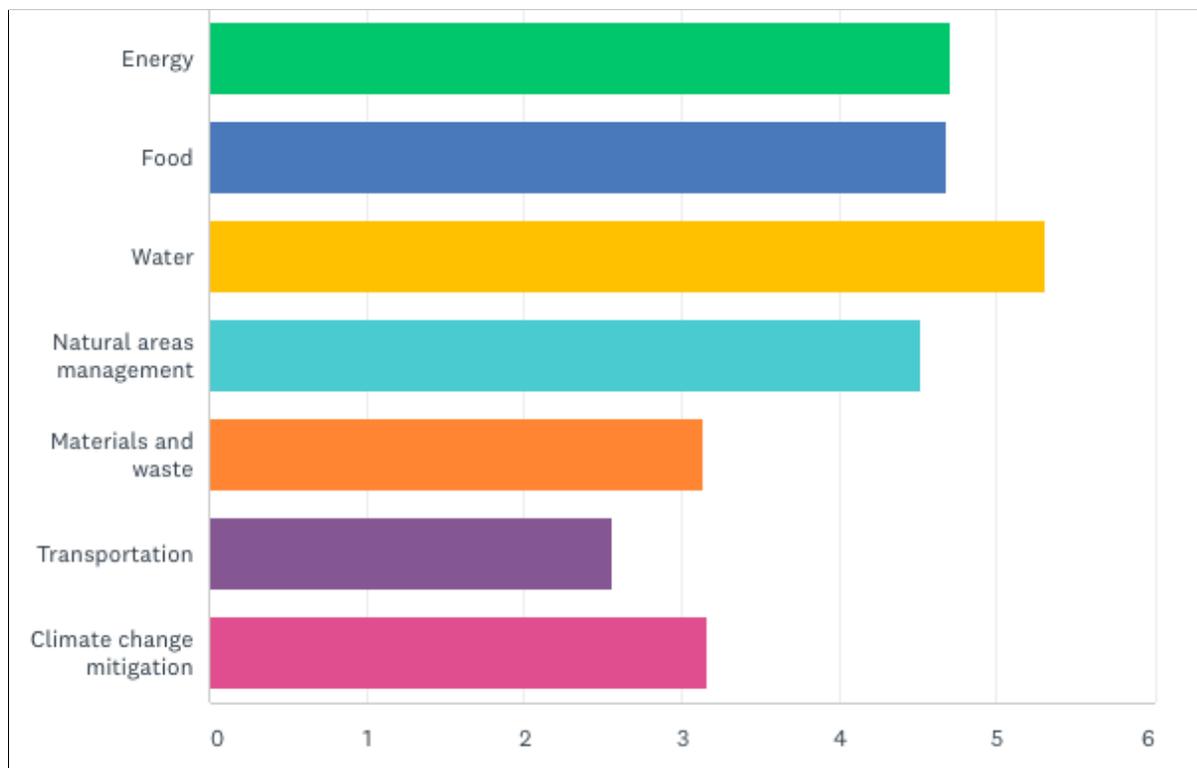
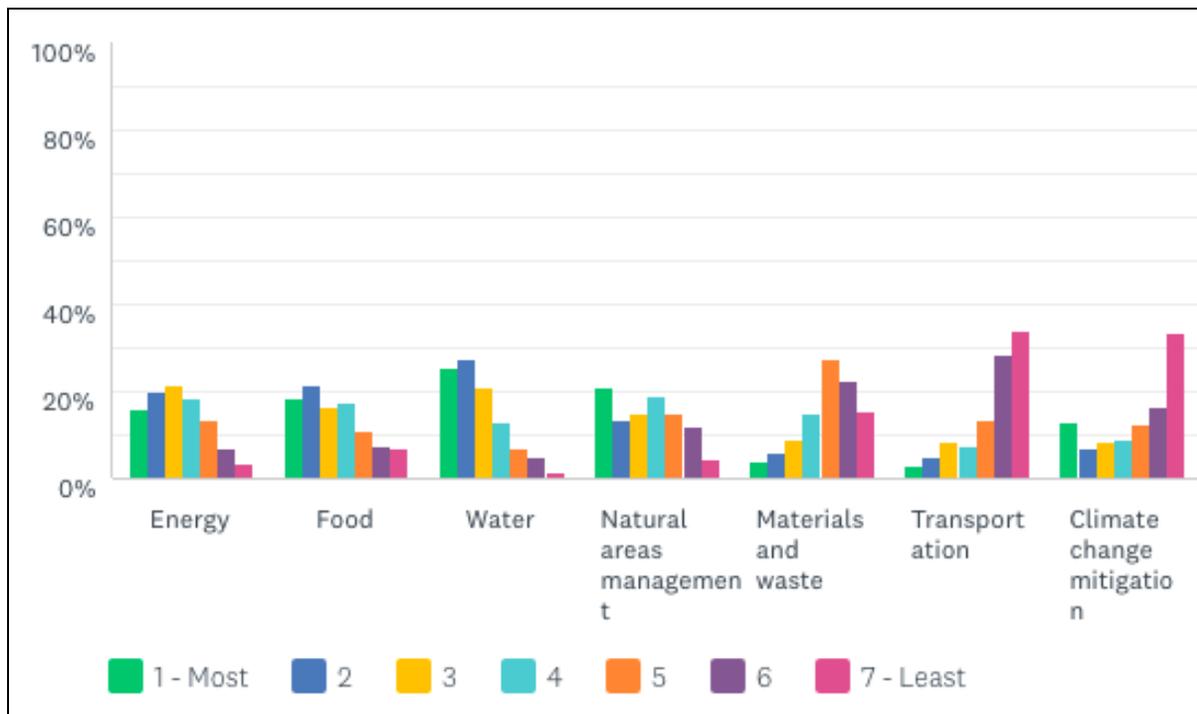


Graph is in relation to hundreds of responses.





How urgent is it for the community to be working on the issues above?



Graph is in relation to hundreds of responses.



1. Water

Overview

City definition: Winona is home to a unique variety of natural bodies of water that require protection from pollutants in order to conserve drinking water and maintain healthy aquatic life. The Sustainability and Resilience Plan will focus on water conservation and protection, as well as green infrastructure improvements, which includes improvements to stormwater runoff infrastructure.

Engagement around water focused on: drinking water; general water quality; the quality of city and area lakes, rivers and streams; access to and use of water from basic needs to recreation; runoff, especially related to development and agriculture; flood events, and related topics.

Analysis

Water was the most popular discussion point and issue throughout the engagement.

Many residents expressed concerns about future flooding and intense storm events - there was not widespread knowledge of the capacity or current conditions of the city's flood and stormwater infrastructure.

Many residents spoke to concerns about runoff from two sources: residential developments on the bluffs, and agricultural uses. These concerns were also mentioned frequently by organizations that work directly with or study runoff issues.

Water was also the issue where participants felt most empowered to influence and lead change on several levels, ranging from advocating for policies at the local and state level to getting directly involved in cleanup efforts like Healthy Lake Winona. Participants also pointed to the ability of individual residents to make meaningful decisions about water - water use, care of residential lawns in ways that doesn't affect water quality - as ways of creating change.



Visions

Continued support for water quality efforts: Residents praised ongoing grassroots efforts and partnerships like Healthy Lake Winona, expressed appreciation for seeing increased attention from the city on water through the sustainability coordinator, and asked for more opportunities to get engaged and volunteer.

Addressing runoff: One area where residents asked for more city control was in how any future developments in the bluffs would affect water runoff or related issues in central Winona and the lakes. Suggestions included increased attention and oversight during application and permitting processes, and wanting to see a clear vision from the city around expectations for future development/expansions.

Limiting salt use: Several residents spoke to the city's use of road salt during winter, wondering if it could be limited or eased; others pointed to the presence of salt piles near the Mississippi and raised concerns of the salt leaching into the river.

Influencing change in individual residents: Many residents suggested the city take on increased education and awareness efforts with individual residents around their own water use - and how other behaviors, like caring for residential lawns - negatively impact water quality in other areas of the city, like Lake Winona.

Continuing to work with rural partners: Residents praised existing partnerships with organizations like the Soil and Water Conservation District in addressing water issues in rural parts of the county, and encouraged expanded partnerships and support.



Key comments

- I'm concerned about precipitation changes. More intense storms, rains, floods. Worrying about our infrastructure in handling stormwater runoff. If only we could capture more rain in people's yards just through increasing organic content, less stormwater runoff, less nutrient runoff, less runoff in lakes and rivers.
- Water rises above all other issues. The city is expanding beyond the river level. Water concerns are a huge county concern, too. City has expanded into areas where groundwater concerns are getting much larger and will continue to do so. We're moving upslope into the bluffs. Water rises because it's so broad and misunderstood.
- Water quality is really the top issue. As it's tied to agriculture, it's huge. Winona County-wise it's huge. It's unfortunate that there's so much conflict within agriculture.
- As a river town I think the City should continue and increase its efforts and publicity of water quality topics. How can we make water more a part of every Winonan's life and our microcultural identity?
- Lake Winona is not a lake that you want to go swimming in or really enjoy other than walking/running around it.
- Water. It's a shared responsibility that cannot be solved through individual choices, and solutions currently exist.
- Cleaning up Lake Winona. Get rid of the geese. They are pooping all over in the lake and in Lake Park which has increased the nitrate levels in the water, and all the poop in the park is a health issue!
- Water issues. Test for PFAs, wastewater from industry, ability of city wastewater treatment plant to handle excessive rain, storm drainage into lake and river.
- Commit to fiscal and environmental analysis of any additional sprawl or development in bluff or township areas. These areas create cost burdens for the city and result in additional runoff into waterways. Winona needs to grow, there's no doubt about that, but it needs to grow up, not out. Bluff development is fragile in the face of a changing climate, as increasing intense rain events wash out roads and erode hillsides.
- Ensuring that our water quality improves (from working on filtering out the naturally occurring minerals, to reducing the amount of potentially harmful agricultural runoff).
- Stop building in our bluffs and vacant areas; restore to natural prairie lands. Let's not make this a concrete city/area where the water has no place to run but into the river.



2. Natural areas management

Overview

City definition: The Winona area is home to large tracts of natural lands with a variety of unique and/or threatened species. Prudent management of these lands will restore and maintain their ecological functions – all the while making these areas attractive to outdoor enthusiasts. Winona also has and will continue to take steps to improve pollinator and native plant areas within developed portions of the City.

Engagement around natural areas management focused on: the city’s overall stewardship of natural areas; invasive species; planning and intentional management; use and access, especially related to a diversity of activities; and related topics.

Analysis

Conversations were not just about access, use and recreation, but around a shared desire - expressed broadly across demographics - to protect and preserve what the city has. Protecting and preserving was defined primarily as first understanding the resources through planning and study, then focusing efforts on collaborative action by the city and community to implement shared goals and visions.

There was a widespread appreciation and support for existing amenities, from trails to water access to more recent expansions of recreational uses like climbing, ice climbing, and improvement to hiking trails.

In conversations and the survey, participants focused on Prairie Island, Lake Park, the Holzinger area trails (or referred to in relation to the Bluffs Traverse plan), and Sugar Loaf. There were calls for more intentional management plans, including a desire to see city planning that traditionally focuses on use shift more toward a balance of conservation and use.

Invasive species was a popular topic, though conversation swung between recognizing the success stories of intensive management and worrying about whether spread will continue to the point where it’s no longer manageable.



Visions

Increased support for citizen, grassroots efforts (Lake Winona): Many participants pointed to significant and widespread success stories of community groups, small nonprofits, and others working both independently and in collaboration with the city to improve natural areas - especially the efforts focused on Lake Winona. Suggestions focused on the city finding ways to provide additional resources and support to these groups - assisting with grants, helping coordinate volunteer events, etc. - and recognizing them as critical, equal partners in providing needed capacity to city's goals.

Continued work on Bluffs Traverse trail, area trail system: Many participants asked for significant improvements to signage and maps, better clarity on multi-use sections, connections among trail systems, and overall improvements to trails. This was an area where participants were also enthusiastic about providing volunteer support, but expressed uncertainty of who to reach out to or where to find opportunities.

Prairie Island master plan, inventory: Participants expressed a need to have intentional long-range planning for the Prairie Island area, starting with inventorying the natural resources and creating a master plan. This need was expressed by birders, who pointed to continued habitat loss as a challenge to local users and tourists; by recreational users of the campground, river access and dog park; and by general residents seeking clarity on how to use and access different areas.

Increased partnerships with higher education: Winona State, Saint Mary's and Southeast participants - both teachers and students - all expressed desires to serve the city in closer ways, through volunteer work, projects, studies, and other connections. The barrier, they said, was needing someone (either at the city, or provided by one of the colleges) to assist with coordination, promotion, and outreach.

Landscaping and care: Several participants asked whether the city had intentional strategies for how public outdoor areas were landscaped and managed, observing the use of non-native species, tree pruning and mulching practices, and other practices that did not appear to be supportive of sustainability goals or practices.



Key comments

- Winona is full of disheveled ecosystems that need lots of remediation. It doesn't work to say we're going to take out the buckthorn because that's not correcting the root causes.
- Nutrients in Lake Winona are the biggest problem - the city needs to figure out what they want Lake Winona to be. It's really a settling pond for half the city ... Do they want Lake Winona to be recreation for swimming and fishing? You can't treat the lake like that
- Need a plan for Prairie Island Park - create a plan and follow through. Same thing with Garvin Heights ... Lot of work has been done, but not by the city.
- Formalize paths, connect paths in the bluffs, maintain what paths we have up there. That way we don't use paths that aren't paths or appropriately made paths. Ton of erosion going on, don't even look the same as they did 10 years ago.
- The loss of our old forest is coming. The invasive species are going to come, and keep coming. Do you say, they're part of us and the ecosystem, and look the other way? When do you give up fighting that fight?
- Do something that not just makes people in the city feel good, but has a measurable impact. Maybe we (WSU, SMU) could work with the city and start using students to go around to parklands, individuals interested, simple soil tests.
- Invasive species - oriental bittersweet - is the biggest problem in rural woodlands. Bad in the city and worse in the county. Unless the county is actively dealing with it the city is going to be hurt.
- Prairie Island is in danger of not being a prairie ... Don't do the development before they have the inventory and the plan. There was something just done at Prairie Island without having information ... they just didn't know ...
- We're really lucky in this region - we're rich with water resources so we won't be hurting
- Extreme water. I think a lot about flooding. We're pretty well-positioned with the dike and mitigation strategies with the lake that maybe it won't be a big issue.
- The river is the most important natural resource, it provides tourism and is home to many species.
- If only we could capture more rain in people's yards just through increasing organic content, less stormwater runoff, less nutrient runoff, less runoff in lakes and rivers.



3. Food

Overview

City definition: The City hopes to ensure the availability of local food and its accessibility to all residents. Empowering residents to purchase local foods as well as grow their own food is an important aspect of ensuring food security in Winona. The Sustainability and Resilience Plan also hopes to focus on community garden and education efforts.

Engagement around food focused on: Community gardens; ability of residents to grow their own food; access to and support of local food networks; support of local food resources like the Farmers Market; and related topics.

Analysis

Two words: Community gardens.

Residents overwhelmingly asked for more access to and availability of community garden plots. They spoke highly of the existing garden at East End Rec, while expressing concerns of eventually losing it to the Rec's future development plans, and noting the loss of the previous space at the east end of Lake Park.

Residents also spoke to the vision of community garden project as something much bigger - an opportunity to bring community members together, provide education, create a collaborative approach to managing the gardens,

Other topics included the ability of residents to grow food, the support of local food networks and existing assets and resources, and the city considering supporting or coordinating the creation of a food incubator.



Visions

Expand use of, access to community gardens: Many participants asked the city to coordinate efforts to expand community gardens to new locations by providing space, access, and support (like access to water). Requests focused on creating multiple locations in different areas of the city in order to be more accessible to more residents. Many residents said they were ready to provide support through volunteering to build out a site, and in teaching, promoting, and other ways of growing interest in community gardens.

Supporting, incentivizing food grown on city yards, lots: Residents asked for more explicit support and space in city ordinances to allow growing local food in yards - not just garden boxes, but the ability to cultivate larger areas of the yard in lieu of grass. Residents also expressed desires to have more education, resources, and a community network supporting growing their own food.

Deeper support for Farmers Market, local foods: Many residents spoke to a need to provide underlying, sustainable support for existing local food resources - promotional support, outreach and education, and even ideas around incentivizing residents to purchase local food.

Local food, kitchen incubator: Several residents mentioned the need, and ongoing discussions, around creating a local food or kitchen incubator - a shared commercial space where budding small businesses and entrepreneurs could process or add value to raw goods and prepare food. Residents asked for city support - especially economic development support and building partnerships - in exploring the viability of an incubator.



Key comments

- We need to reconnect with where our food is coming from
- The community garden is the one issue that really needs to be addressed - would love to see a group of people that have been assigned by the city to bring the community together to do (a new community garden) in a public space that we can manage together.
- Very easy for us to say - “you should” - grow your own food. But without an equity lens it’s hard. People don’t have time to grow their own food. Boxed processed food makes it too easy to turn down.
- Building empathy and closeness - social trust - the element of gathering - Farmers Market is a great example of all that, of gathering combined with local production of healthy foods
- Local food business incubator - encourage people to finish products to sell - like a commercial kitchen or clearinghouse or some way people would know when kitchens would be available.
- Building local food systems and networks is really critical. Hard to put those things together. With no one ultimately responsible it comes and goes.
- One idea is for stores to label locally grown products and have recyclable materials clearly labeled. People want to eat locally grown food, but may not be sure how to find locally sourced food. Education on how to obtain local, organic food would help folks
- The city should repurpose old buildings for vertical farming to provide the community easy access to fresh locally grown food.
- Thinking big here, What if the City subsidized buying at the Farmer's Market or Co-op? There are many people who can't afford to eat locally. Not only making local food more economically accessible, but also incentivizing it, would I think have a really profound impact not only on those consuming the food but also the farmers who grow it.
- Access to and education with self sustainable food plots all over town. I believe this will be absolutely beneficial to our community.
- Accessibility of affordable local foods and accessibility of land for those who want to grow nourishing food. As wannabe organic farmers, the number one challenge is access to affordable land, be it only a few acres.
- The local foods movement, specifically helping people in all locations and economic situations grow even a small part of their food.



4. Energy

Overview

City definition: The Sustainability and Resilience Plan will continue efforts to increase the uptake of cost effective energy efficiency and clean energy opportunities. This includes working with local utilities to maximize use of rebates and incentive programs.

Engagement around energy focused on: Energy efficiency in building standards and practices; opportunities for and availability of renewable energy for both residential and business; residential uses of energy;

Analysis

Overall, residents are seeking accurate, up-to-date information, access to resources and incentives, and knowledge to empower them to make energy-efficient choices and upgrades.

Generally, participants broadly viewed energy efficiency and conservation as an important goal, as well as one largely out of their own hands and control.

A lot of conversation focused around residential energy efficiency, and more sustainable and efficient best practices for businesses. Significant engagement came from renters, who asked for ways of improving the energy efficiency of their home either independently or by working with landlords.

One recurring theme with both business owners and residents was deepening distrust of and hesitance to invest in solar energy, solely because of the increasing presence of dubious vendors with misleading advertising and aggressive sales pitches.



Visions

Codes, guidelines, best practices for energy efficiency: Several residents suggested updated codes, sharing of best practices and guidelines, and other approaches to help residents and business owners think through and make accessible changes to their energy use.

Stories of success: Several participants said stories that spotlight homeowners or business owners investing in energy efficiencies or renewable energy go a long way toward convincing others to make similar changes. They noted that some energy-efficient buildings are likely going unnoticed because they aren't pursuing LEED or similar certification due to the costs and logistics.

Resource collection, promotion: Many residents and business owners said they had little understanding of or ability to research what incentives, programs, rebates, or offers were available, and said they'd benefit significantly from the city or some partner maintaining and sharing an up-to-date list of resources and opportunities.

Incentives for renters, landlords: Many comments focused on the need for energy efficiency measures in rentals, both college rentals and the broader market. Some said landlords would benefit from having incentives to weatherize and upgrade homes, while others suggested programs that empowered renters to apply for or make energy-efficient upgrades.

City support for renewable energy investments: Several businesses and some residents expressed interest in investing in solar energy in particular, but were put off by the number of misleading offers and apparent scams being peddled to them. The request was for the city (or some central group) to be able to screen offers and let customers know which companies are legitimate - or create and provide a list.



Key comments

- Energy is a priority - but as a small community, it's not something we have a lot of say in - more at state level and national level
- If we saw a business, a big manufacturer, build a new building that was a LEED building, that would be an example. Modeling the leadership and investment.
- LEED buildings are good but they're so expensive - better to do the energy efficiency work without bothering to get the certification
- I (want to see) builders building efficient homes, above code. 2,000 square foot homes using less than \$1K in energy. That's still high but good for a new home.
- East End Rec building, police/fire department, all those new buildings - sounds like a great place for energy efficiency, solar panels to save money over time.
- Particular to buildings and energy, could the city incentive or assist to a greater degree energy-efficient upgrades to buildings? Insulation, air sealing, ventilation, materials.
- Do we have the Home Energy Squad in the area? In the Twin Cities area, you can sign up for a Home Energy Squad visit, paid for or supplemented by the city, and they will install energy friendly lighting, weatherization, etc. and give you recommendations for ways to further improve energy efficiency in your home.
- (Our business) is interested in solar, but we can't trust the promotions related to solar energy - wish someone could give us a list of approved, reputable vendors
- Get landlords to take more responsibility for ensuring rentals are energy efficient/have better weatherization. Or programs that allow renters to apply on behalf of their landlords for certain programs ... There are a ton of rentals in Winona that are not sealed and are leaking energy
- Is there a way to increase solar in the city of Winona? Is there a way to help homeowners line this up, or financially support addition of solar on homes? I think more solar energy in Winona would make a huge impact.
- I think Winona is ideally situated to be a renewable energy hub.



5. Transportation

Overview

City definition: Transportation is important to every community. Public transit access, bikeability, walkability, and energy efficient automobile infrastructure are key aspects to the future success of the Winona community. This plan will address clean transportation infrastructure and access to multi-modal transport for city residents.

Engagement around energy focused on: Infrastructure for pedestrians and bicycles; accessibility of public transportation; infrastructure for electric cards; a need for city vision and priorities for vehicle infrastructure.

Analysis

We had very little overall engagement on transportation, to the degree where some participants referred to it as “an afterthought,” unless we specifically prompted folks to talk about the issue. When asked, participants generally said other issues felt more important or more achievable, they were generally satisfied with transportation infrastructure and options, and/or they primarily drove a car and didn’t think much about transportation.

That said, the survey in particular produced good comments and input, much of which focused on asking for expanded infrastructure and support for bike lanes, electric vehicle chargers, and signage.



Visions

Interconnected bike paths: Many participants suggested stronger interlinking of city bike paths using signage, street markings, or other indicators, especially with indicators of major destinations or stopping points.

Electric vehicle chargers: Participants shared support and several ideas for expanded vehicle charging stations, including at Levee Park, Lake Park, and in partnership with downtown businesses.

Address downtown parking culture: Several participants referenced the continued disconnect between studies that show adequate parking capacity downtown, and perceptions that downtown parking downtown is difficult. Suggestions included better signage for public lots, support from downtown business owners, and incentives from businesses, Main Street, or other partners to support biking and walking.

Support for second train: Participants were supportive of or pleased to learn about ongoing advocacy for a second daily passenger train between the Twin Cities and Chicago with a Winona stop.

Increased signs, wayfinding: Participants complemented the large, bright, visible downtown signage and wayfinding, and suggested similar signage in other parts of the community, especially along established bike routes or near pedestrian-heavy neighborhoods like those surrounding Winona State. Other requests for signs were near outdoor recreation areas, trails, parks and other public amenities.



Key comments

- Making things more walkable is going to help downtown businesses. At a walking pace you are much more likely to pop into a spot as opposed to driving. Connecting paths around Winona is low-hanging fruit. Just signs. From the bluffs to the Sugar Loaf path. If you go this way, you get downtown.
- De-incentivizing cars. Winona is ready-made for de-incentivizing car travel. It's not that big of a town. Can walk anywhere you want.
- Parking is a big culture problem.
- More push for community EV chargers. Main Street was a lost opportunity - but it is wired to install it - this was a huge project and they didn't put in one space for any charger. That area by the Levee would be a prime spot to do it, by the movie theatre.
- Ecotourism would bring in money if there were sustainable infrastructure here. Back to a great walkable, bike-friendly city.
- Train that runs two times a day to this town could be quite something.
- Could really use infrastructure for Maplewood. Not super safe. Or safe at all.
- Walkability and accessibility - beyond the automobile - sustainability as often defined is about climate and carbon. More walkable cities require less total miles of roadway, have smaller impact on ecosystems.
- Interconnected pedestrian/bike-friendly community with more, better public transportation options
- Some form of mass transit that would do a "rectangle shape" around Winona every hour, particularly Monday-Friday.
- True equity in transportation and streets (bikes, pedestrians, and cars) and better access for non-drivers to more natural areas.
- Making Broadway more pedestrian friendly and safer to cross. We were so disappointed when the improvement plans were scrapped this year. Making this safer for pedestrians and bikes helps the sustainability effort too. Our family lives blocks from downtown, but I feel unsafe when we cross Broadway on foot or bike, which may cause us to choose driving when we wouldn't otherwise.
- NO more bike lanes. Teach people how to use the bike routes properly
- Our city is extraordinarily bikeable. So better and safer bike routes. That would also mean fewer parking lots needed. Stores would be better connected.



6. Materials & Waste

Overview

City definition: The City desires to help residents and businesses reduce the amount of waste they produce. Winona County coordinates recycling for the county and regulates solid waste hauling, and are a strong partner in this effort. Managing organic wastes such as yard debris and food waste are emerging considerations.

Engagement around materials and waste focused on: A desire for a residential composting program; an idea for a hub/forum for businesses to trade or sell unused raw materials; supporting trash and recycling reduction through education and outreach; appreciation for the county's hazardous waste facility; ideas around reducing food waste.

***Note:** Business suggestions in this category are discussed more in depth in the "Business Engagement" section.*

Analysis

The largest input came from residents asking about the potential for residential composting pickup service, and expansion of the kinds of compostable food waste programs available at some larger organizations, like Winona Health.

The general consensus was that participants were interested in the issues of materials and waste, but didn't feel particularly empowered or capable of working toward change. They overwhelmingly saw this topic as being the responsibility of the county and of the business community.



Visions

Curbside composting service: This would be a county service, and the county has explored it extensively but run into significant barriers; still, given the level of community input asking for it, we wanted to ensure it was highlighted here.

Hub to trade/sell local raw materials: Manufacturers and larger business owners built or expanded creative networks during the pandemic to trade, share and sell unused raw goods or leftover materials - rather than trash or recycle them - when they had a surplus or other businesses had critical needs. The networks were word-of-mouth and informal, but proved to meet a big enough need that the request is for the city or some coordinating partner to create an exchange or hub for businesses to post materials or make requests.

Key comments

- Post consumer compost! I know many municipalities pick up compost. Is there any way for the city to collect compost, and turn it into a sellable product so it is hitting both the environmental and profitable sustainability points? Especially if this gardening trend, thanks to the pandemic, continues.
- More recycling bins downtown
- Food waste reduction - goal is to reduce overall sizes of garbage containers. Important one economically - reduce food waste.
- (Winona County) doesn't a lot of one-off recycling which can be challenging - like electronics. The future really is - talk to the people first who created the problems, the manufacturers, and find some solutions.
- As a homeowner in Winona, I wanted to add that consistent compost pick-up would be a wonderful, sustainable, addition to our already robust recycling programing. I fear that currently there's a lot of green waste being put into the trash because there are very limited options to deal with yard waste.
- What happens to waste in this place right now. Where is "away" - you throw things "away" - where is that? In this case, your wastebasket goes to Iowa or Wisconsin to a landfill maybe 200 miles away. Is there a better solution?
- Compost pickup. It may not make the biggest difference but would probably require the least amount of effort to get going. A program like this would also keep food waste out of the landfill and return it into the ground to enrich the soil.
- Build more sustainable policies that address waste and consumption from factories and larger industries that are more largely contributing to global warming and climate change, compared to individual residents.
- Banning plastic bags, styrofoam, educating restaurants and organizations on environmentally friendly options.



Other priorities & preparedness

Overview

In conversations, in the survey, and in public events we asked two large interconnected questions:

- What one issue or project should the city or community be working on, or working more on, right now?
- What one sustainability project or issue, if addressed, would make the biggest difference in Winona?

Analysis

Most responses to these questions were directly connected with the six core topic areas; ideas and visions rooted in a specific topic have been moved to that topic's section.

We wanted to use this section to clear space for any other general ideas and other priorities that emerged during the engagement process, as well as to share residents' input on how prepared they believe the city and community are to deal with the plan's three pillars of equitable outcomes, economic resiliency, and environmental impact + climate change.

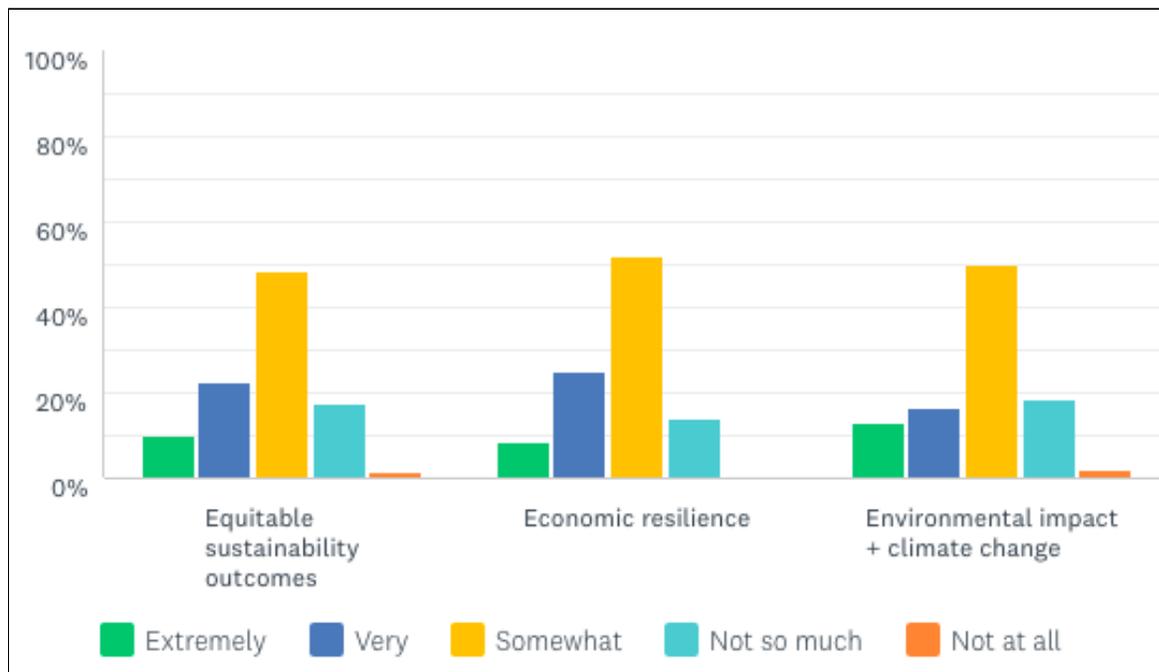
Selected comments: Other priorities, projects with biggest impacts

- Determine a future for the Winona Farm - that should be a key goal of the plan ... Make the Winona Farm an environmental, ecological center for education.
- An economic base that is sustainable/addresses climate change would be to the benefit of us all... jobs that would keep young people here, economic stability and equity to mitigate the current "haves"/"have not" disparities and vulnerabilities to economic and environmental fluctuations, city planning that would mitigate impacts of the severe weather patterns brought on by climate change, eco-tourism that sustains natural resources but also allows people to enjoy outside spaces, etc.
- Equitability: this town doesn't have enough affordable housing, and this directly affects any and all plans for sustainability
- HOUSINGGGGGGGGGGGGGG, please help residents attain stable housing to be able to begin thinking about sustainability over survival
- Increase community education/interest on the importance of sustainable practices.
- Make buying local (in all categories, including food) affordable and convenient.
- Racial and economic equality

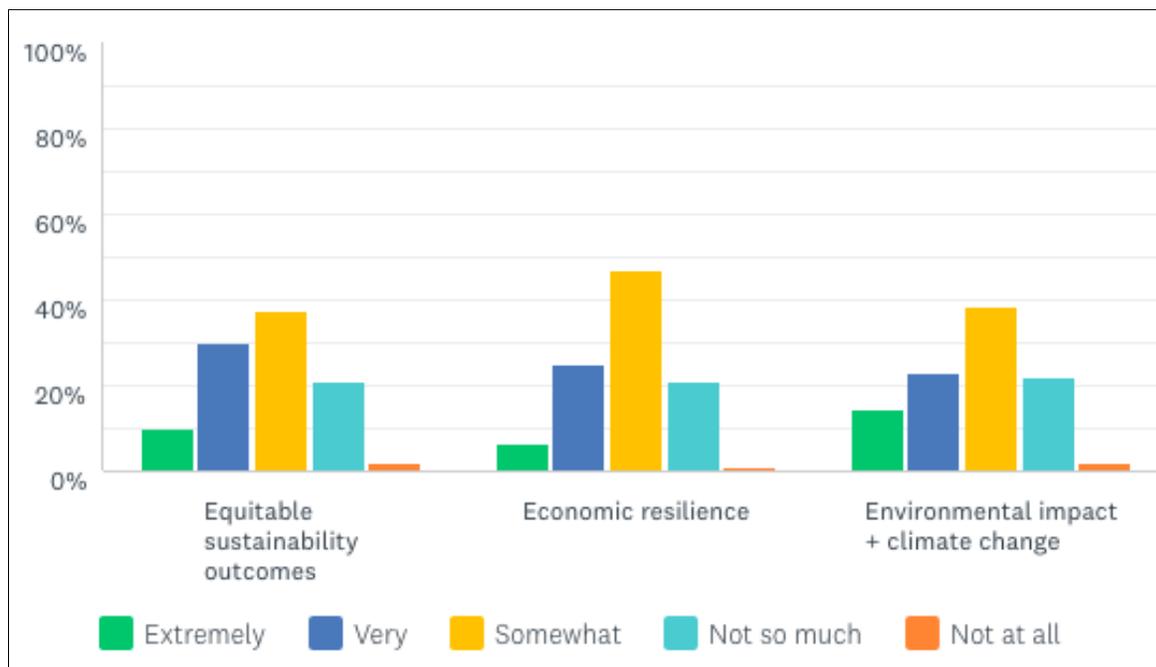


Preparedness

In your opinion, how prepared is the city and community to address:

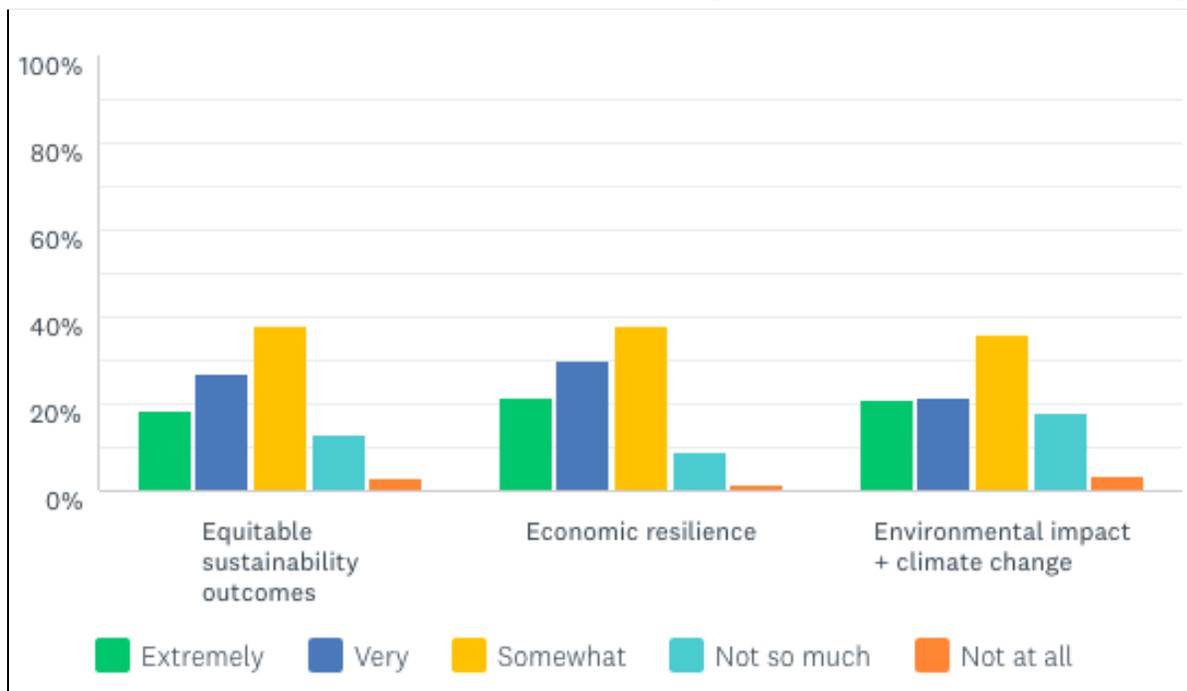


In your opinion, how responsible are individual residents in addressing:

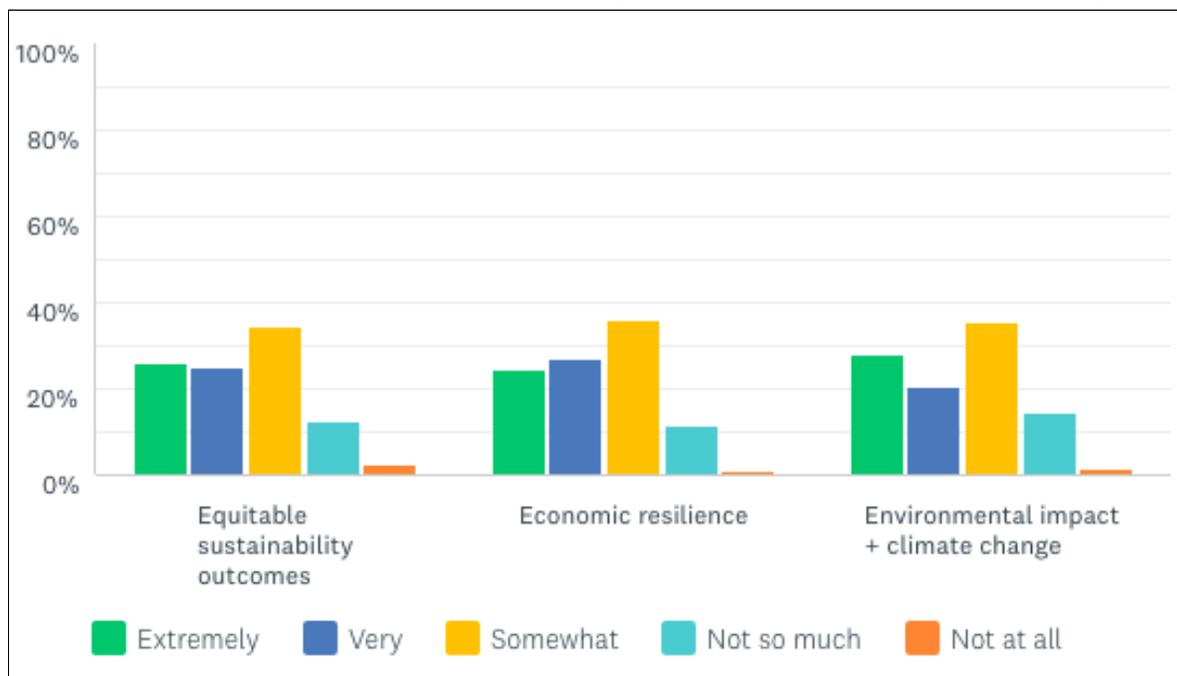




How responsible are businesses/organizations in addressing:



How responsible is the City of Winona in addressing:





Appendix 1: Business engagement

Overview

A key engagement goal was to connect with the business community - particularly manufacturers, larger employers, and businesses most directly involved in sustainability efforts.

We held personal conversations with business owners in March, hosted a business roundtable conversation in April, and facilitated an Eggs & Issues event sponsored by the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce in May. We also created and promoted a business-specific survey exclusively to local employers.

We reached more than 35 businesses, including several large manufacturers, and received responses to questions ranging from how local businesses measure and work toward sustainability efforts to what their largest needs are that the city could potentially address.

Selected responses - ideas for business engagement

- **An entity to develop a website or some place where companies can post what the materials are that are available** - other companies have interest in reusing or repurposing those - wouldn't have to go to a landfill
- **Need a better network** - the city could play a huge role in helping build a network of sustainability resources, access to incentives and grants, business best practices, things like that.
- **Can (the sustainability coordinator) proactively contact businesses about rebate and incentive programs** to make sure they're aware?

Selected responses from survey, conversation questions

How important is sustainability to your business?

- All participants, in the survey and in conversations, responded with "somewhat," "very," or "extremely" - none chose "not so much" or "not at all."

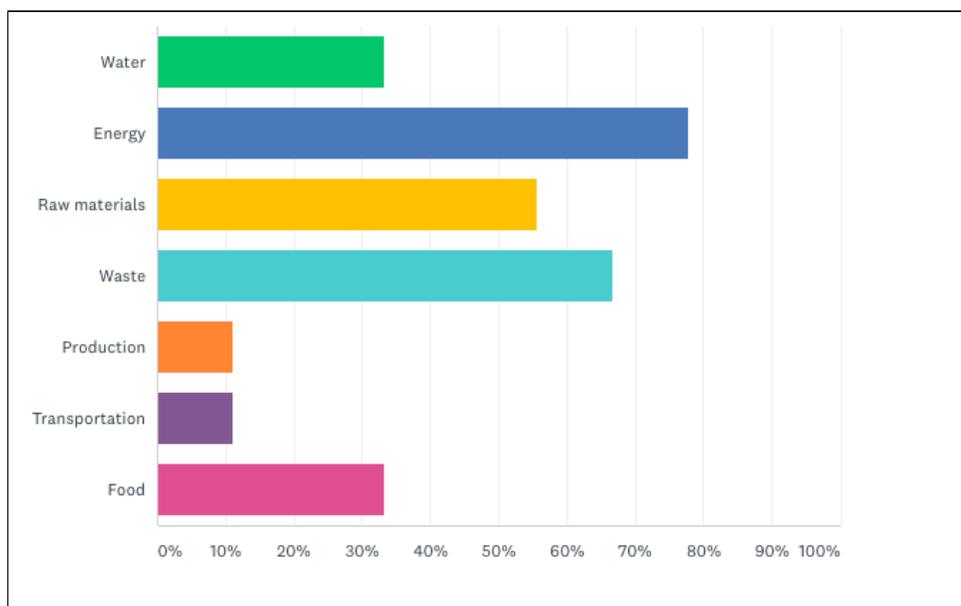
How does your business define sustainability?

- Long term use and engagement with minimal single-use consumption



- Sustainability is working in harmony with nature, according to the needs of the natural environment we interact with on a day-to-day basis.
- Not officially defined but we strive to use materials consciously, purchase materials that are eco-friendly or recycled, and recycle and reuse as much as we can eliminating unnecessary waste.
- Behrens' sustainable manufacturing is the creation of our manufactured products through economically sound processes that minimize negative environmental impacts while conserving energy and natural resources. Sustainable manufacturing also enhances employee, community and product safety. Our Sustainable Production is the creation of goods and services using processes and systems that are circular ... Behrens has also developed a line of organic composting products.
- Using resources responsibly and minimizing environmental impact.
- Stay in business and leave the planet better for those who come behind us.
- Giving to the community at least as much as you take from the community...figuring out how to make the biggest positive impact while leaving the smallest footprint.
- Watlow is also committed to helping preserve the earth's natural resources. Watlow will create and maintain a safe, healthful and environment friendly workplace. Comply with all relevant health, safety and environmental regulatory laws and Watlow policies. Incorporate appropriate health, safety and environmental considerations into daily job duties and business decisions.

What is the most important area your business focuses on to be more sustainable?



This graphic represents just a handful of responses to the business-specific survey, though responses in conversations also aligned with the focus on energy, waste and raw materials.



What's one thing the city could do to support your business with sustainability goals?

- I'm not sure. I'm a corporate employee that sits in Winona, so I'm not responding on behalf of the site. I'm part of our global sustainability team and looking at what opportunities might exist.
- Recognize and share with the community how local companies and manufacturers are making a difference and how they are making a difference being kinder to the planet. Behrens is a leader and offers a service on the website behrens.com to find a metal recycler nearest them to recycle their metal products for cash. Again, offering services to the community to do the small things that can make a difference.
- Do site visits to help identify sustainability opportunities and how the city might support those efforts.
- I know it's a county program, but how can we be better recyclers? And is a compost program feasible? Can the city encourage/facilitate placement of solar collectors on the large, flat roofs of downtown businesses?
- Give us good information about programs, incentives, best practices - A lot of our knowledge comes from industry publications, doing the research and finding the information yourself. For the most part it's a grassroots effort to figure out what to do.
- Companies pitching solar farms - hard to trust that route in how they solicit what they are doing. Looking for some reputable providers - vetting providers. Maybe city could even just do a workshop to help us know the difference.

What concerns, if any, do you have about the city creating this first sustainability plan?

- Businesses can really move the needle and we want to be partners and assist in making those happen.
- I appreciate how diligent the city is being in getting a range of opinions from people. I do hope they are working hard to ensure underrepresented voices are included.
- Want to be sure the city is looking ahead for the future in terms of growth and expansion for our current and future businesses/manufacturers. We want our economy to continue growing and welcome more people to live in our community. We need to look ahead to the future and not just focus on where we are now and only think we are going to stay the same.
- I worry we don't have the language (yet) or the vision (yet) to see broad possibilities
- My only concern with the topics, and sustainability in general, is that they trend towards the aesthetic or quality of life solutions rather than lasting, long-term, broad solutions. Renewable energy was discussed but are there other incentives, methods, or regulations that can encourage conservation, reduced energy or waste.



Appendix 2: Favorite natural areas & accessibility

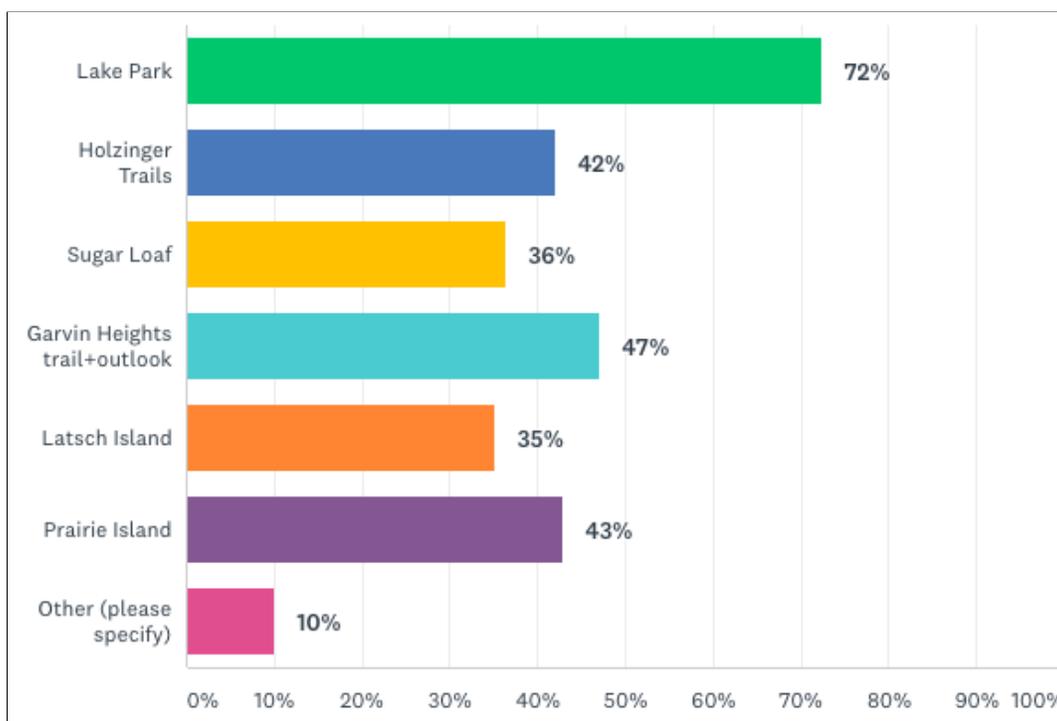
Overview

We asked participants in the survey (and at most public events) about their favorite natural areas in the city and how accessible they were, as a way to help them make deeper connections to sustainability issues and topics.

These responses fall more to public usage and park and recreation work, but intersect with sustainability and we wanted to include them as a way to help the city prioritize and focus on natural areas.

Note: The graphics represent survey responses - about 450-500 for each graphic.

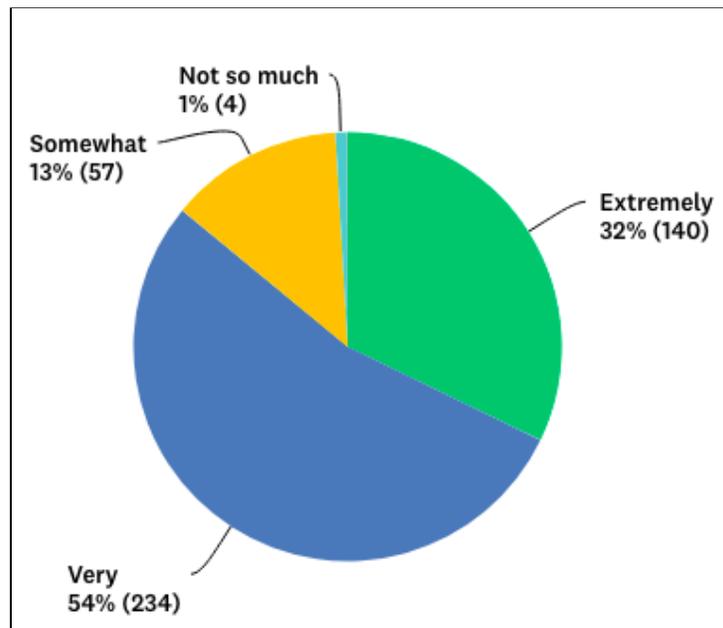
What's your favorite natural area in the city? (Can select multiple)



Note: The "Other" responses (~10%) focused primarily on natural areas near the Mississippi River, the dog park, Levee Park, and the Saint Mary's University trails.



How accessible generally are Winona's natural areas to you?



Analysis: What one change would make a specific area or all areas more accessible to you or your family?

The responses (380+ in the survey, plus conversations) focused primarily on these themes:

Lower speed limit at Lake Park: Several participants asked whether the speed limit along Lake Park drive could be reduced to 15mph or 20mph, citing the high volume of pedestrians, cars backing out at Lake Lodge, traffic during heavy uses like softball - and, most critically, the presence of young children near the playgrounds.

Difficulty for pedestrians to cross Sarnia to get to Lake Park: This was one of the most-expressed concerns; participants asked for additional safety measures - a longer light at Franklin Street, flashers at Hamilton and Carimona, etc.

Local trail map, signage: Several participants asked for an easy-to-read, detailed map of local trails - particularly the Holzinger area. Many asked for directional signage and wayfinders both within trails and in areas leading to the trails.

Accessible, gender neutral bathrooms: There were several requests for more portable bathrooms, accessible portable bathrooms, and gender-neutral bathrooms at facilities like Lake Lodge.



Appendix 3: Sustainable behavior & outdoor activities

Overview

We asked participants about the sustainability practices and behaviors they engage in currently, and which behaviors they'd be interested in adopting in the future - especially with support, education or resources from the city.

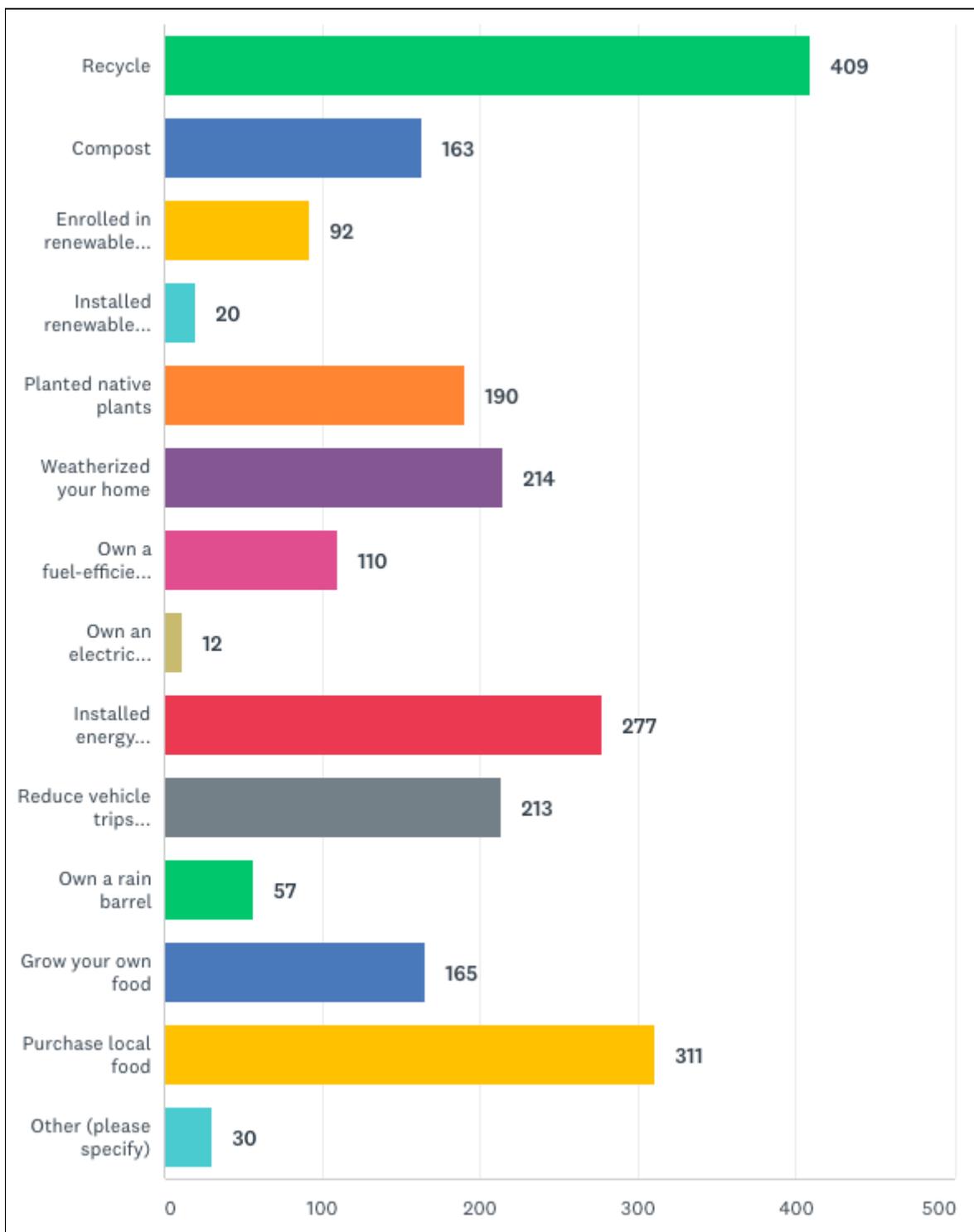
Finally, we asked participants about their favorite outdoor activities - again as a way to bring them deeper into sustainability topics.

Response key:

- Recycle
- Compost
- Enrolled in renewable energy program
- Installed renewable energy for your home (like solar panels)
- Planted native plants
- Weatherized your home
- Own a fuel-efficient or hybrid vehicle
- Own an electric vehicle
- Installed energy efficient lighting
- Reduce vehicle trips (carpooling, walking, biking, etc.)
- Own a rain barrel
- Grow your own food
- Purchase local food
- Other (please specify)

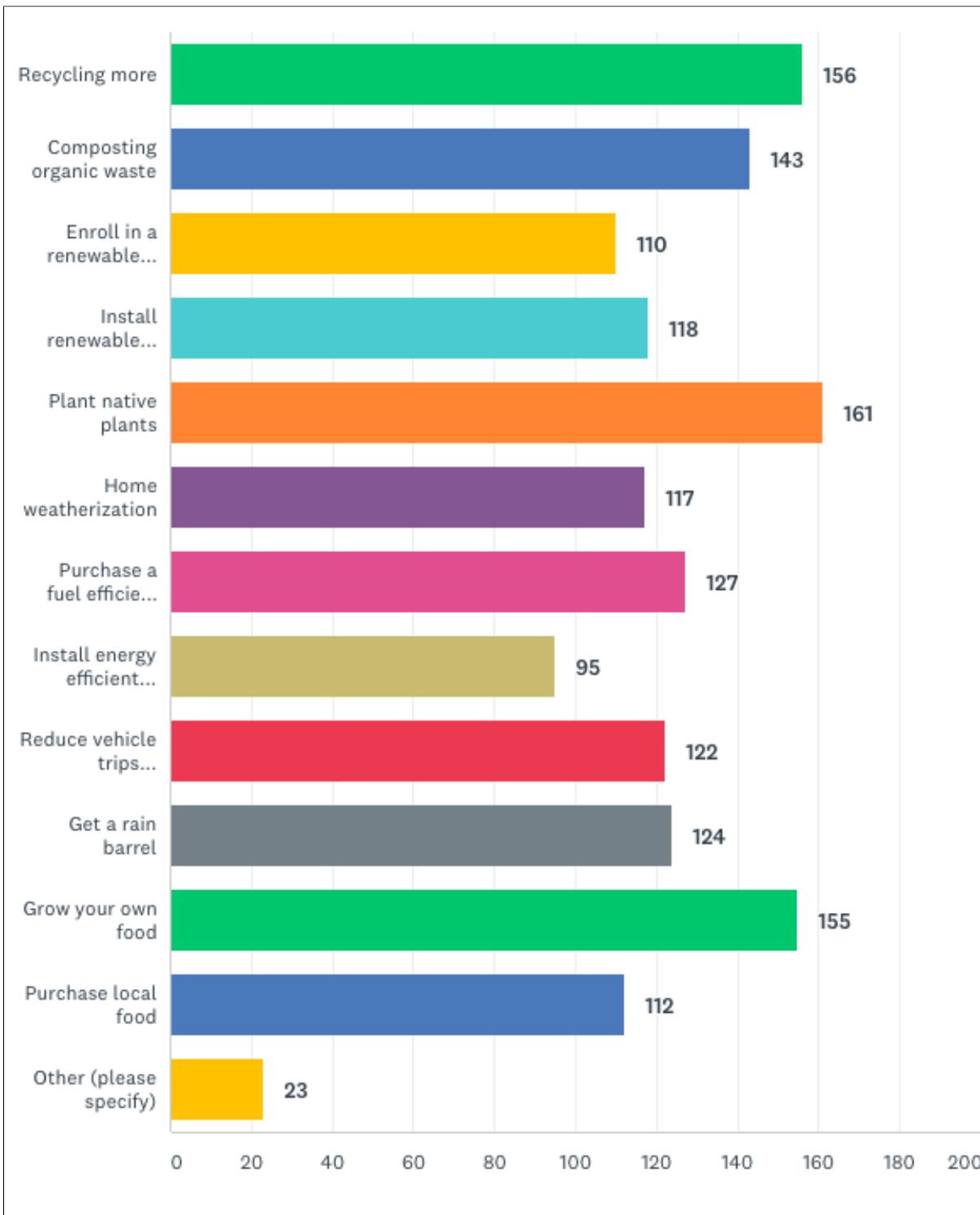


Which sustainable activities do you do now? (select all that apply)



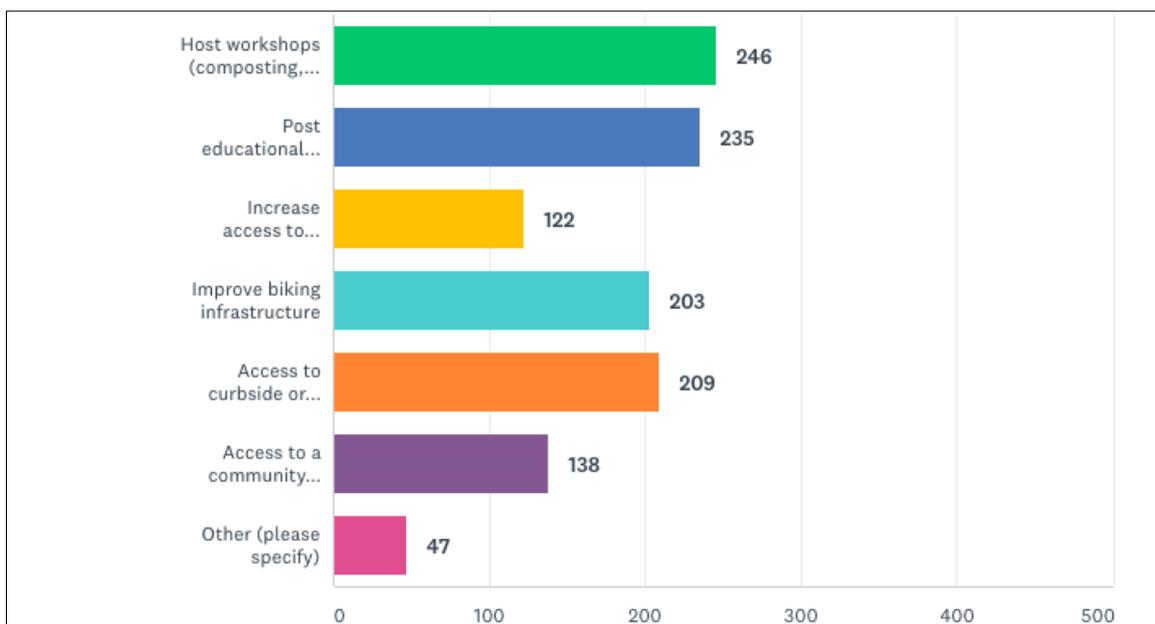


What changes (to sustainable activities) if any do you hope to make in the next few years? (select all that apply)





How could the city support you in making any changes? (all that apply)



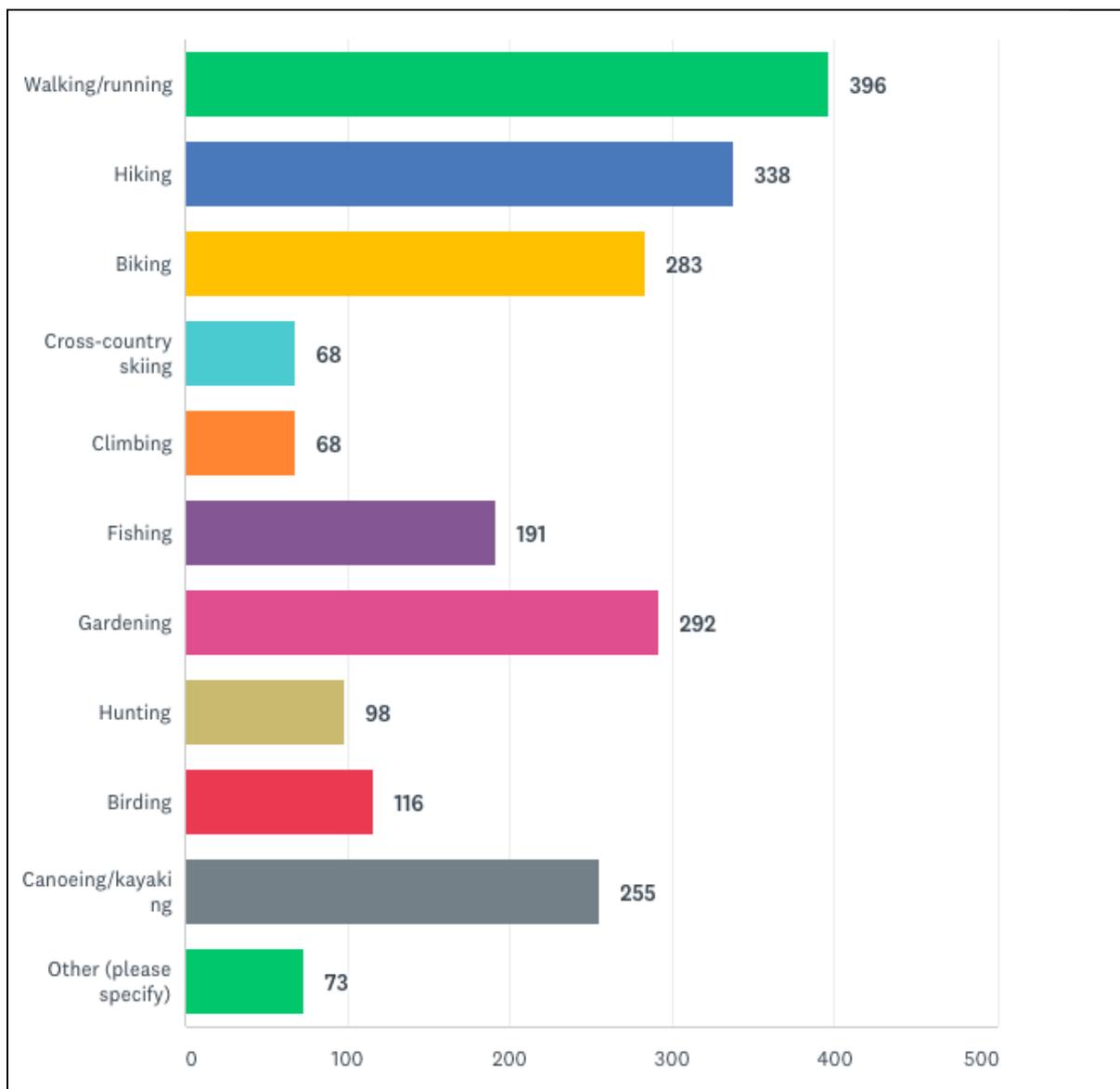
ANSWER CHOICES

- ▼ Host workshops (composting, native plants, rain gardens, home weatherization, energy savings/renewable energy options)
- ▼ Post educational information (above topics) on the website or social media
- ▼ Increase access to electric vehicle chargers
- ▼ Improve biking infrastructure
- ▼ Access to curbside or dropoff organics recycling
- ▼ Access to a community garden
- ▼ Other (please specify) [Responses](#)

“Other” responses primarily included additional references to community gardens, requests for incentives or tax breaks for sustainable behaviors, and supporting renewable energy by purchasing/installing on city facilities.



What outdoor activities do you enjoy? (select all that apply)



It was impractical to include every single option - the "Other" responses primarily included disc golfing, swimming, birding and watching wildlife, rollerblading or rollerskating, golfing, camping, and relaxing outside.



Appendix 4: Participants

Overview

The engagement process sought to capture the voices of broad, diverse cross-sections of Winona, with particular focuses on business, education (both preK-12 and higher ed) and underrepresented voices. We were successful in all these areas.

The demographic numbers below represent everyone: survey respondents, participants in dozens of stakeholder conversations, participants in targeted outreach to specific communities, and participants in broad community events. The graphics only represent survey respondents.

***Note:** Demographics are self-reported, and are an optional part of our surveys. In this project, about 80% of survey respondents self-reported. At public events, demographic collection is not comprehensive and is at times very limited. These numbers are primarily used as a way to gauge whether our engagement broadly cleared our ever-critical test of connecting with a diverse cross-section of community members.*

Details

- Nearly **80%** live in Winona; others live nearby (Goodview, neighboring rural areas) and/or work in Winona
- **About 85% white**, 5-6% Black, 2-3% Indigenous, 2-3% Hispanic or Latino, 2-3% Asian (including Hmong)
- **50%+ of respondents are employed in Winona** - high number of residents with local jobs
- **Ages ranged from high-school students to seniors**, with a strong representation of younger voices - 30% younger than 30, 50% younger than 40; balanced distribution of other ages - 10-15% in 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s
- **Great balance of time lived in Winona** - 44% 10 years or less, 55% 10 years or more
- **Household income generally aligned with city demographics:** about 30 percent reported up to \$50,000 (this includes students); about 40-45 percent



reported \$50,000-\$100,000. About 15-18% reported up to \$150,000, and 5-8% above that. This category always has the highest level of non-responses.

- **Education levels skewed toward the highly educated:** about 10-15% in or completed high school; 20% with some college; 45% with some kind of college degree. The final 15-20% percent had worked toward or completed advanced degrees - the highest figure we've seen in our engagements
- **Gender skewed toward female**, representing about 60-65% of participants - this has been consistent across all of our engagement projects
- **About 35-40 percent are parents** or guardians of children under 17



Appendix 5: Project activities

Stakeholder conversations

Through conversations, Engage Winona collected more than 2,000 unique responses and insights from nearly 200 individuals representing a diverse cross-section of key stakeholders across community sectors, including business, government, nonprofit, education, healthcare, grassroots and community groups, and others. Conversations were designed to be responsive to each group, with questions tailored to the demographics and perspectives present.

A baseline set of questions was used to guide the conversations. The questions varied widely, and were adapted based on the experience and conversational threads of each group. Examples of primary questions included:

- How do you define sustainability?
- What are Winona's most important natural resources, and why? How well do you think they're managed or protected currently? What could change to make that better?
- What are the biggest short-term challenges (to sustainability, resiliency, natural resource management/protection) Winona faces?
- What are the biggest upcoming opportunities (to sustainability, resiliency, natural resource management/protection) Winona can take advantage of?
- Which one of these topic areas do you/your organization work most directly in; which create the biggest challenges or opportunities for you, and why?
 - Energy use
 - Food
 - Water
 - Transportation
 - Natural areas management
 - Materials+waste
- What are some sustainability success stories to point to, recently and historically?
- If the city's sustainability plan had just one element or goal to work toward, what should it be and why?

Stakeholder groups represented

Here is a comprehensive but not exhaustive list of the key stakeholder organizations and groups who contributed to the public engagement and provided input:



PreK-12 education

- Winona Area Public Schools
- Cotter Schools
- Riverway Learning Community
- Bluffview Montessori

Higher education

- Winona State University
- Winona State Environmental Club
- Saint Mary's University
- Minnesota State Southeast
- Southeast's Sustainable Ag program

Local government

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Winona Citizens Environmental Quality Committee
- Winona County Environmental Services
- Winona County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Winona County Extension

Business

- Winona Area Chamber of Commerce
- Winona Main Street Program
- Behrens
- Watlow
- Xcel Energy
- Mississippi Welders Supply
- Miller Ingenuity
- Winona Health
- Hiatt Metal Forming
- *(Several others asked their participation to stay anonymous)*

Sustainability-focused business and community groups

- Bluff Country Co-op
- Winona Farmers Market
- Winona Climate Action Network (CAN)
- Winona Area Pollinators
- Winona Bird Club



- Minnesota Driftless Chapter of the Prairie Enthusiasts
- The Nature Conservancy Minnesota chapter

Nonprofits

- Winona Nonprofit Alliance (collectively representing more than 40 nonprofits)

Public events

We held a series of public events in outdoor spaces throughout late April and all of May, working to be responsive to COVID safety and residents' general hesitance to participate yet in in-person engagement. We collected more than 300 comments and input from more than 200 individuals who participated in activities and brief conversations at Lake Lodge, the Farmers Market, the Co-op, and other locations.

Digital survey

We launched and marketed a digital survey between mid-March and the end of May and received more than 520 responses. Of those, about 450 fully completed the survey, and an additional 20-30 completed substantial parts of the survey; just a few were partially or barely completed, and a few others were left blank and excluded from the results.

We provided small incentives for participation - those who fully completed the survey were eligible to win either one of several \$25 gift cards to a local business of their choice, and one lucky winner received a \$100 grand prize gift card to the business of their choice.

All responses to the survey, both open-ended and ranked, are detailed throughout this report.

The full set of public data, cleaned to remove any personal or identifying data, and sorted by theme and topic, is available as part of the public release of this report.