



ENGAGEWINONA

# Comprehensive Plan Update Engagement Phase 1 Report



**YOUR IDEAS,  
WINONA'S FUTURE**

Engaging the community to shape our future



ENGAGEWINONA

Presented January 2022



# **CITY OF WINONA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

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# Introduction letter

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Dear City of Winona Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, elected officials, staff, and community members,

Public Engagement Phase 1 for the city's Comprehensive Plan Update kicked off the project with big, essential questions: What do we value most as a community? What issues and opportunities are most important to us as we plan for our next 20 years? And what are our dreams for Winona's future? These questions use an asset-based framework to thinking about the future, one where we start from our strengths and build on a foundation of core values.

Our engagement strategy was designed to hear from broad, representative cross-sections of the Winona community. As we continue to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, we designed engagement to meet people where they are with a combination of pop-ups at public events, digital survey tools, in-person and virtual conversations, and a voicemail box.

From October 2021 to January 2022, we asked folks to share their values, issues, and dreams for Winona's future. Over the course of this engagement, we:

- Connected with more than **2,000 people** and collected more than **5,700 unique comments**
- Hosted **7 public community conversation events** at a variety of locations across Winona, including in-person and virtual offerings
- Hosted a **pop-up booth with activities** at 7 different community events
- Held **more than 55 small-group and individual conversations with key stakeholders** including business, nonprofit, education, and healthcare leaders; property owners and developers; faith leaders and more
- Provided a **survey that collected more than 800 responses**, with offerings both online and in print at community locations
- Provided an **online map** where people could comment on physical locations that stand out or need to be worked on
- Engaged **marginalized and underserved voices** through focused outreach to communities, including youth and older adults; refugees, immigrants, and people of color; people experiencing poverty and housing insecurity; people in addiction recovery, and more
- **Directly engaged the business community** through multiple events and partnerships, with over 100 business leaders represented in survey and conversation participation

Engagement was a huge success, and we heard meaningful input and ideas on each of the Comprehensive Plan Update's 10 key topics and 3 overarching themes, along with visions and ideas for creating change, both on a community level and through city programs and services.



The full results of this work are included in this engagement report and sorted by topic and theme. This report is designed as a complement to HKGi's Baseline Report, which presents technical data and analysis related to existing programs, services, and infrastructure, along with demographic and economic trends.

Engagement Phase 1 is the first of three major engagement phases for the Comprehensive Plan Update project prior to development of a draft plan. Phase 2, which starts in February 2022, will give community members opportunities to take a deeper dive into topics like housing, transportation, economic development, and more. And in Phase 3, we'll provide a range of engagements for community members to take a look at pathways and priorities, with an emphasis on projects that rise to the top and are attainable. Finally, community members will review and provide feedback on the draft plan in 2023.

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve the City of Winona with this work. Engage Winona exists to ensure all voices are heard, represented, and supported in community decision making, and we are honored to have worked with the city to engage residents on many occasions since our founding in 2017. We deeply appreciate the city's ongoing investment in Engage Winona's mission-driven work of civic engagement and community problem-solving.

Sincerely,

Marcia Ratliff  
Executive Director, Engage Winona  
engage@engagewinona.org | 507-312-9133

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## Project summary

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### Introduction

Engage Winona led community-wide engagement between October 2021 and January 2022 to frame the foundation of the city's Comprehensive Plan Update. Our process is a complement to HKGi's much larger work of designing and producing the overall plan including technical analysis, benchmarking and goal-setting, integrating case studies and recommendations, and other work.

Our ultimate goals are to create a plan that includes the views, visions, and ideas of a broadly diverse and representative cross-section of the community and results in findings that are co-owned by the community to produce results. It takes a village, as the saying goes, and our engagement in Phase 1 surfaced a variety of meaningful, achievable ideas that will take broad community ownership and collaboration.

### Activities and approach





Below you'll find a summary of the different tools we used to reach a representative cross-section of community members in this phase of engagement. Since our inception in 2016, Engage Winona's community engagement process has been both universal and targeted. Our public events and surveys are open to all, and they are well-attended by folks who have a high level of interest and capacity to attend. However, public events by themselves fail to reach our most marginalized neighbors and cannot address all barriers to access. So we also bring our conversations to underserved groups, working closely with a wide variety of community partners to accomplish this.

### **Community conversations and focus groups**

Through a total of 65 large and small group conversations in Phase 1, along with written and voicemail comments, we collected more than 1,800 unique comments from over 270 individuals representing a diverse cross-section of key stakeholders across sectors, including business, 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. Below you'll find a snapshot of stakeholder groups who participated in Phase 1.

### **Stakeholder groups engaged in Phase 1**

Higher education and preK-12 education	Tourism and small business
Youth	Winona Nonprofit Alliance
College students	Communities of color
Faith leaders	Immigrants and refugees
Older adults	Individuals and families in poverty
Winona Area Chamber of Commerce	Individuals experiencing homelessness
Large business/manufacturers	Veterans
Property and real estate developers	LGBTQ+ individuals

We look forward to building on this strong foundation and bringing engagements to more community members in Phase 2. People interested in hosting a comment board, focus group, or other engagement at their business, organization, or community group can contact us at [engage@engagewinona.org](mailto:engage@engagewinona.org).

### **Online survey and map**

We launched and marketed an online survey from November 15-December 19 that received more than 800 responses. The survey was comprehensive and designed to provide an alternative to events for those who preferred a quicker way to give input. The survey was also available by mail and on paper at three public locations.

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.

We also launched an interactive map in partnership with HKGi that allowed folks to leave place-specific comments about aspects of Winona they like, areas that need work, and barriers to biking and walking. The map had over 550 unique visitors, and 54 users left a total of 285 comments.



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.

### Pop-up activities booth

We hosted a pop-up activities booth at 7 events this fall including Big Muddy Brew n Que, Jeny Kochany Polish Festival, the Winona Farmers Market, Streets n Treats, Winona Area Chamber of Commerce Network Nite, Winona County Historical Society's Handmade Neighborhood, and Caroling in the Garten at Peter's Biergarten. The booth reached over 390 people and resulted in 244 unique comments.

Want to host our booth at your neighborhood block party, your break room, or somewhere else? Contact us at [engage@engagewinona.org](mailto:engage@engagewinona.org).

### Voicemail project: What's your Winona story?

We tried something new with a dedicated voicemail number for folks to leave comments throughout the project. The prompt is this: *What are your hopes as you imagine your future in Winona? Leave a 1-3 minute voicemail with your answer at 507-312-9486.* We received comments from 2 individuals during Phase 1, and their comments are included in our aggregate analysis for this report. Audio responses will be woven into a collaborative recording and shared with the public at the end of the project.

### Participants

We collect participant demographics primarily as a way to gauge whether our engagement truly connects with a diverse cross-section of community members. Demographics also show us where we have more work to do in future phases.

Here are some key demographic insights, representing everyone: survey respondents, participants in stakeholder conversations and targeted outreach, and participants in community events. Survey respondents voluntarily answered demographic questions, and demographics from events and conversations are approximations based on informal windshield counts.

- **Strong representation of racial and ethnic diversity:** About 88% identify as white, 5-6% Black, 2% Indigenous, 2% Hispanic or Latino, 2% Asian
- **Broad representation of ages, with more representation of voices under 45:** about 10% ages 13-24; 25% ages 25-34; 25% ages 35-44; 20% ages 45-54; 20% ages 55 and up
- **Great balance of time lived in Winona:** 40% 10 years or fewer, and 60% 10+ years.
- **Household income slightly higher than city demographics:** 25% reporting below \$50,000; 50% between \$50,000-\$99,000; 25% higher than \$100,000. According to census data at [mncompass.org](http://mncompass.org), the City of Winona's household income breakdown is 51% below \$50,000; 31% from \$50,000-\$99,999; and 18% \$100,000 or more.
- **Education levels were higher than city demographics,** with 55% having a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 34% in census data.
- **Families represented:** About 55% of participants have children 18 or younger in the home
- **Good representation of people who rent and people who own their home:** 30% renting and 70% owning, compared to 40% and 60% in census data.



We take a deeper dive into demographics in our full report.

### **What's in the full report**

We've included the top themes and topics immediately below. The full report takes a deeper dive into the results in the following sections:

#### **Values and dreams**

- Responses to the prompts “What do you value most about Winona?” and “What are Winona’s greatest assets?”
- Dreams for Winona’s future

#### **Ideas and issues**

- Responses to the comprehensive plan update’s 10 topics and 3 overarching themes: equity, technology, and sustainability
- Responses to the prompt “What are your ideas for Winona’s future? What changes do you want to see, and what issues need to be addressed?”
- Sorted by plan topic area

#### **Places and behaviors**

- Places people value in Winona
- Behaviors - where folks spend time and shop in Winona
- Heat maps - showing where folks commented on the map of Winona

#### **Participation**

- Ideas for accessible government
- Participants

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## **Top themes**

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### **Overview**

This section is a collection of top themes. Many are explained in further detail in various sections of this report. The goal here is to have a high-level overview.

These themes 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 - values and dreams by general theme, and ideas and issues by core comprehensive plan topic area. Many require city involvement and investment, especially as a catalyst, but are rich with possibilities for community collaboration and sustained action.

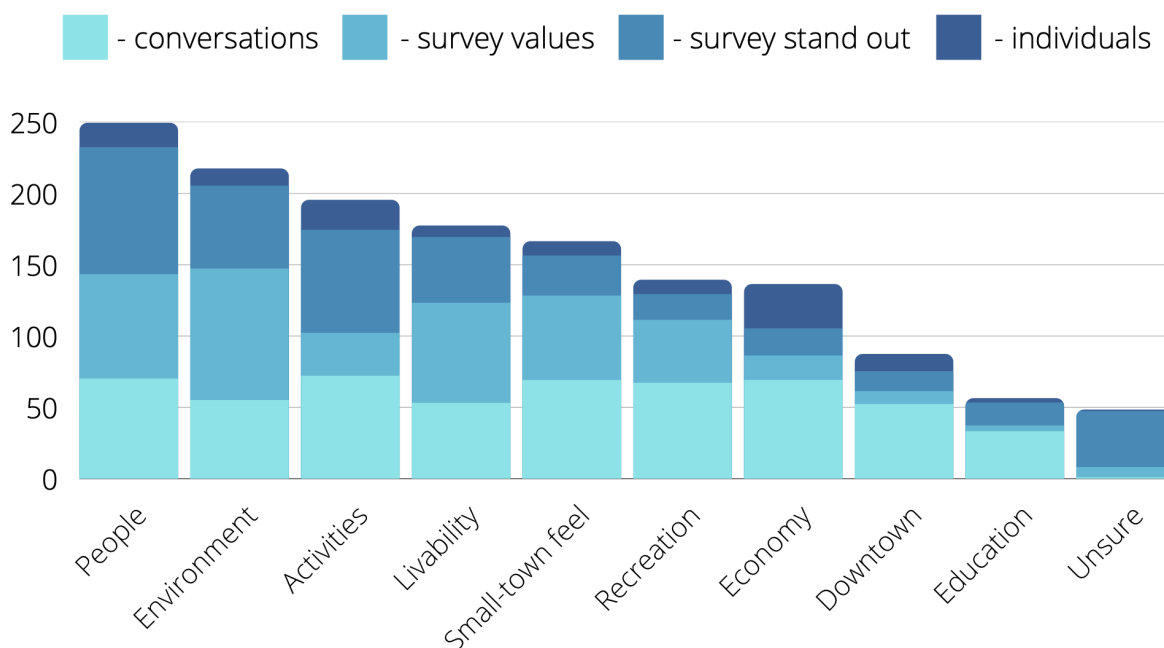


## Values

In our conversations and survey, we asked folks to respond to the question: What do you value most about Winona? What do you consider to be Winona's assets? What makes Winona stand out as a community?

The chart below represents 1,470 comments.

### Values By Theme



Values were sorted according to interconnected themes that emerged in our analysis. We have named these themes as a starting point based on what we heard; we know that these ideas may shift and deepen as the project continues. We hope these placeholder values help give a snapshot of what we heard, and a pathway to connect our current strengths to our future dreams as a community.

#### **People - Winona's got good people. (249 comments)**

This includes a sense of community and inclusiveness, a community that is welcoming, diverse, and friendly.

#### **Environment - Winona has a unique natural setting and physical beauty. (218 comments)**

This includes taking care of Winona's environment so future generations can enjoy it.

#### **Activities - Winona has something for everyone. (195 comments)**

This includes community arts events, concerts, theater, family-friendly activities, and youth activities.

#### **Livability - Winona is livable and attractive. (179 comments)**

This includes housing choice and community services that support health and well-being.

#### **Small-town feel - Winona has a small geographic size and a small-town feel. (164 comments)**



This includes a general feeling of safety, heritage, and ease of getting around.

**Recreation - Winona has access to outdoor recreation and parks. (139 comments)**

This includes trails, playgrounds, and other amenities.

**Economy - Winona has a robust, varied economy. (135 comments)**

This includes entrepreneurship, innovation, and public and private infrastructure.

**Downtown - Winona has a vibrant, historic downtown and riverfront. (87 comments)**

This includes storefronts, streetscape, parking, and historic preservation.

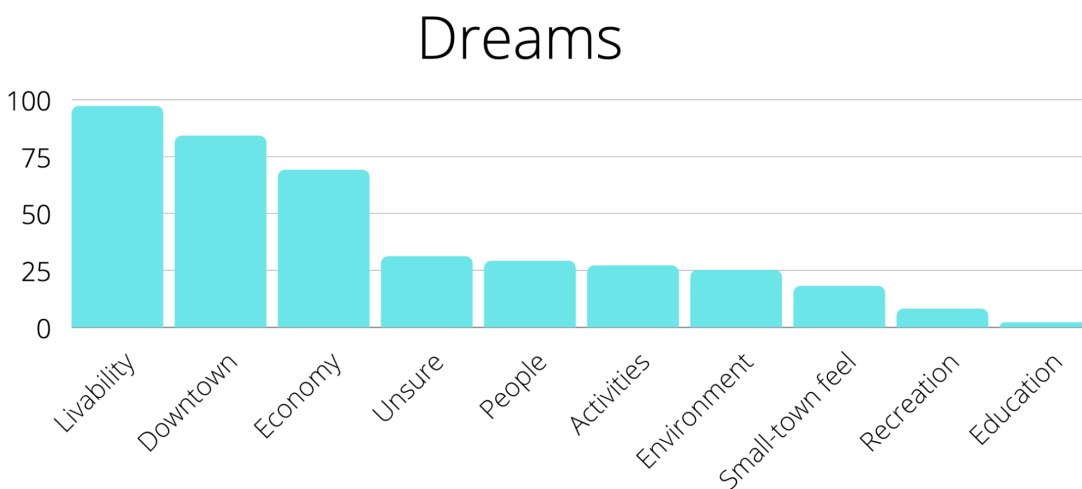
**Education - Winona supports lifelong learning. (56 comments)**

This includes E-12 and higher education.

## Dreams

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big, imagine nothing is in their way, and tell us what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. We received 393 comments for this question.

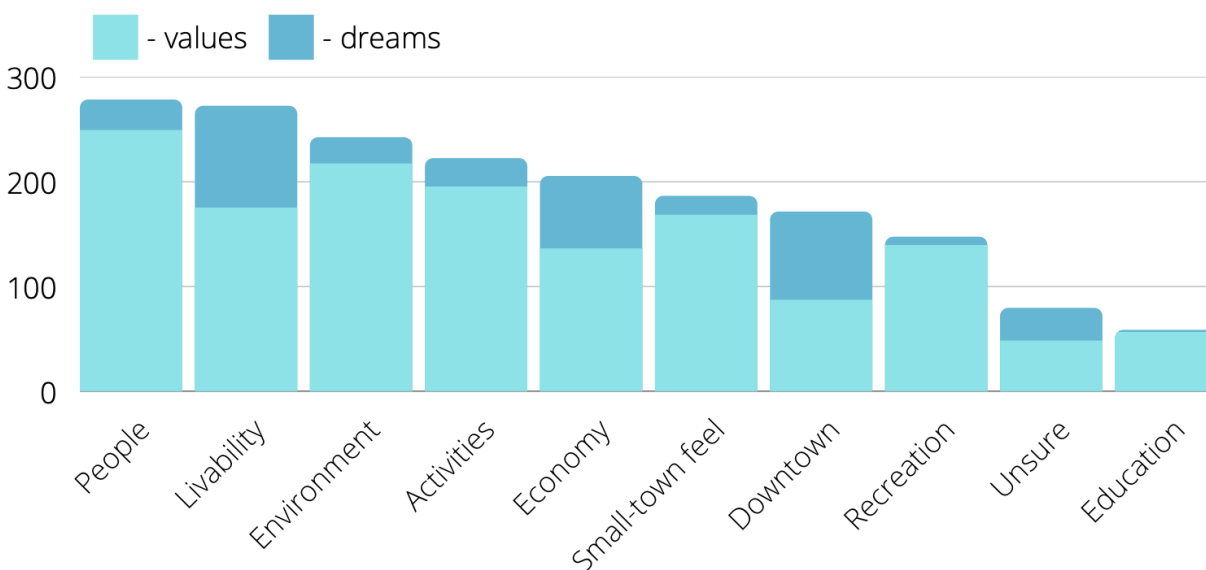
The largest categories of dreams were broad livability and community services (97 comments), downtown and riverfront vitality (84 comments), and a thriving economy, including workforce supports like childcare and improvements to the city’s infrastructure and overall appearance (69 comments). Many comments referencing broad livability included a variety of the other themes, reflecting a holistic vision for a vibrant future Winona.



In the chart below, we overlaid dreams onto the values from the section above. The chart below represents over 1,800 comments across methods.



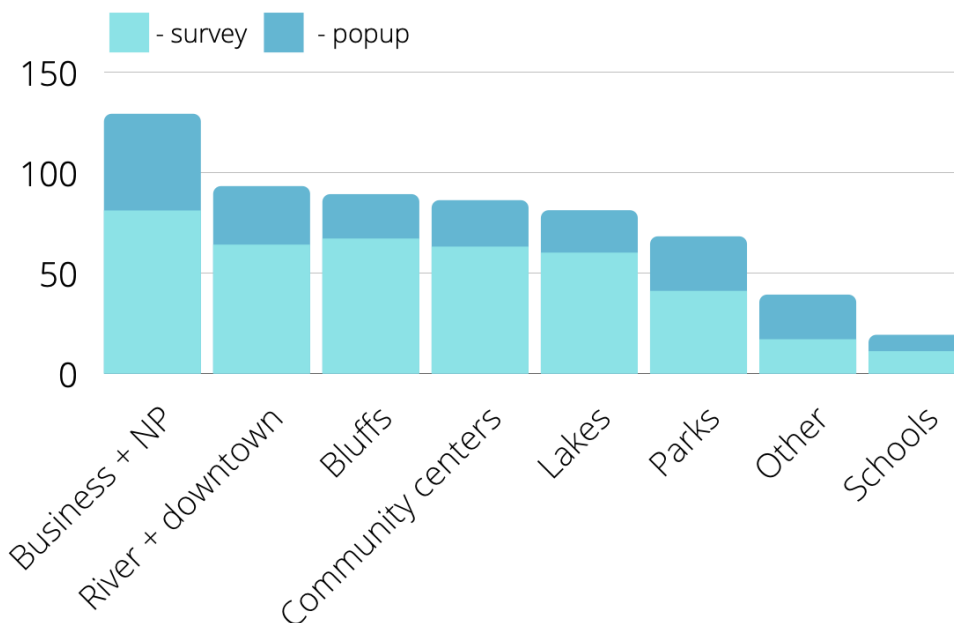
## Values + dreams



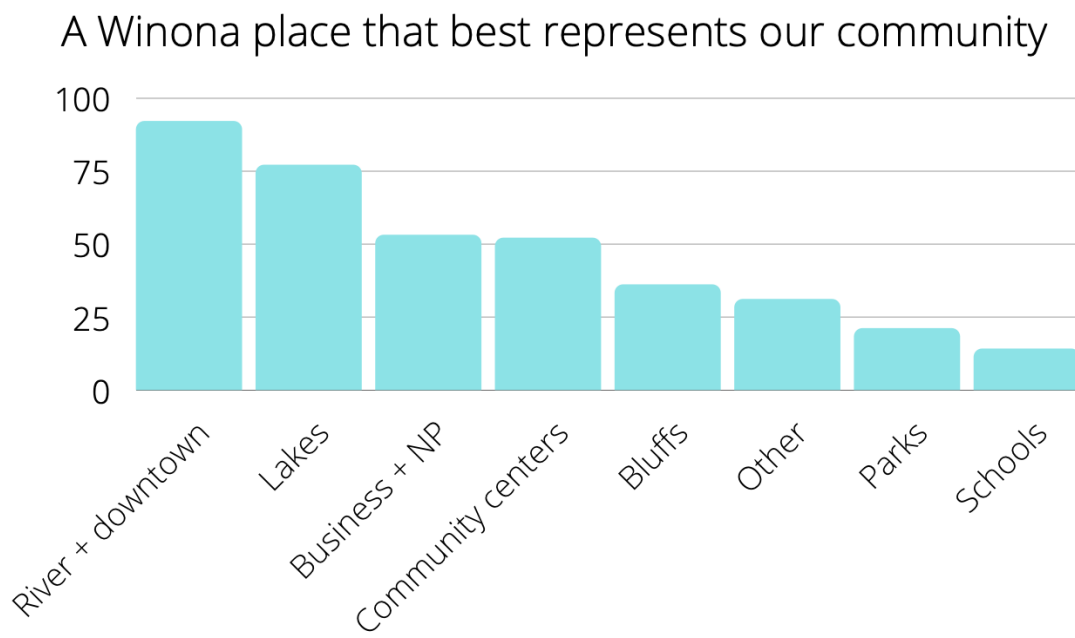
## Places

In our survey and pop-up events, we asked folks to tell us about places they loved. We received a total of 976 comments for this question. NP stands for nonprofit in the charts below.

### A place in Winona where you love to be



In the survey, we asked an additional question: What Winona place best represents our community? Folks unpacked this question in a lot of wonderful ways, as you'll see later.



## Behaviors

In our survey, we asked a few questions about where folks in Winona relax and shop. **84% of participants said they spent free time in Winona daily or weekly.** 86% said they shopped in Winona daily or weekly. 79% said they frequently visit one or more small, locally-owned businesses in Winona.

About half of survey participants took a few minutes to tell us which small businesses they visited. **90% percent of responses mentioned businesses that are located in downtown Winona.** Restaurants, cafes, and bars were mentioned in 71% of responses; retail stores in 63% of responses; and grocery stores in 40% of responses.

## Ideas and issues

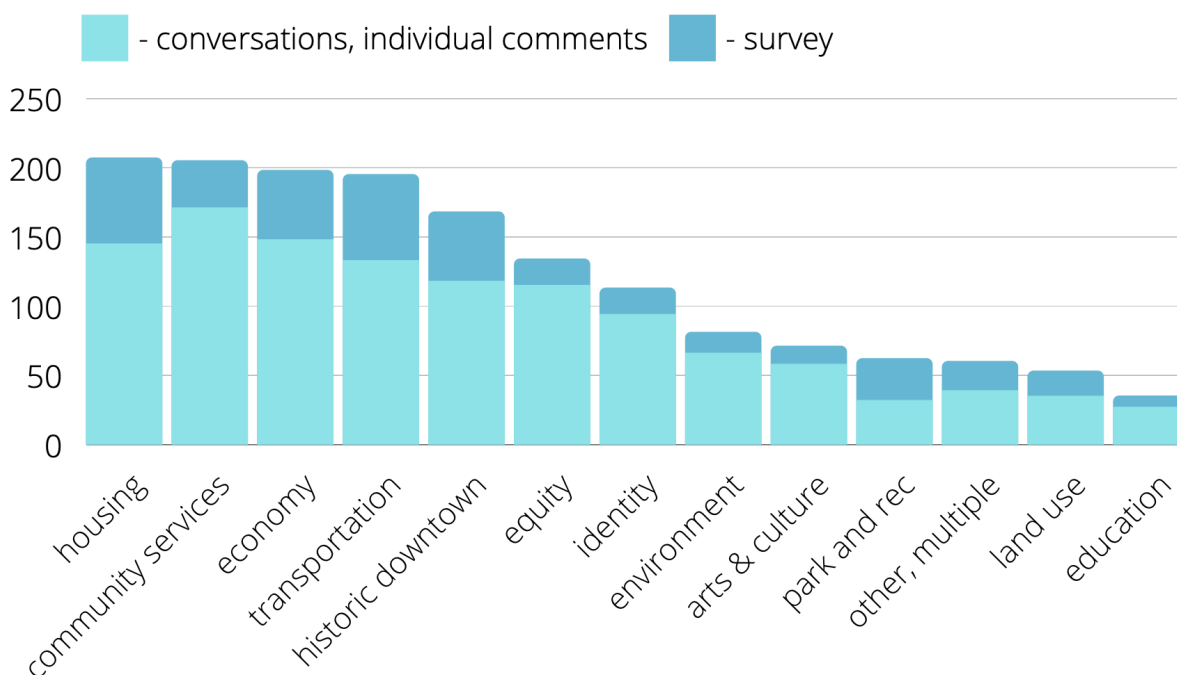
In our survey, map, conversations, and popups, we asked folks to tell us their ideas for Winona's future, and identify the issues that were most important to them. We received a total of 1,866 comments related to issues and ideas. We sorted the ideas and issues according to the comprehensive plan topics where possible.

Additional topics that emerged from these responses include **historic downtown, community services, community identity, and education.** We also received comments that did not fit into the comprehensive plan topics, and they are included under "other." In future sections, we'll unpack all feedback received by topic.



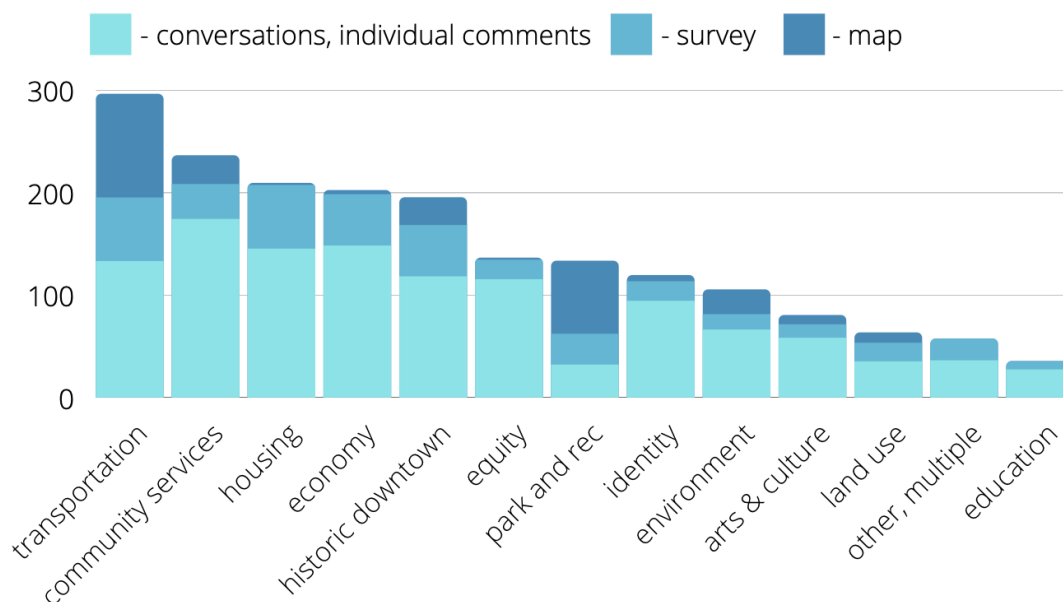


## Ideas + issues



The majority of map comments we received were about transportation and recreation areas. The chart below shows the total ideas + issues comments with map comments included in dark blue.

## Ideas + issues, including map





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## Part 1: Values + dreams

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# What do you value most about Winona? What are your dreams for Winona's future?

### Overview

Our public engagement for the comprehensive plan update is rooted in assets. We're starting the conversation with Winona's strengths and most loved characteristics because these are the building blocks of the community's future. Furthermore, as we talk about big things like *change* and *the future*, folks told us it was important to keep and enhance the essential Winona-ness that makes Winona special. So we asked folks to tell us what Winona's greatest assets are and what makes Winona stand out. Below you'll find our summary of what matters most to our community.

For each core value, we present an overview of what we heard with key themes and selected comments. Then we present dreams that people identified related to each core value. The full set of dreams responses is included as a separate document with this report.

### Community - Winona's got good people. (249 comments)

**This includes a sense of community and inclusiveness, a community that is welcoming, diverse, and friendly.**

Key themes related to community:

1. People in Winona pitch in and help out. Selected comments:
  - the small community does actually come together and give back when people need it.
  - The citizens are engaged and helpful. When grass roots efforts are needed, Winonans pull together!
  - Kindness and care for each other. When the pandemic happened, and the "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" fb page was started, I have seen people be especially interested in each others lives and helpful whenever there's a need (and people who ask for help too, probably because they trust people want to give it). The community events like trick or treating down town are also so fun! I love to see people come together.
  - the community. they have accepted me back in and offered me support
2. People in Winona get involved. Selected comments:
  - There is a wonderful cadre of people who are committed to seeing our city grow in the best ways, by being inclusive, artistic, creative, sustainable, and fun.



- That for the most part people are really invested in the community. They show up to conversations about issues impacting the city. They are politically active. They know who local elected leaders are and they try and hold them accountable.
  - we have a very engaged community, people who are very passionate and are pretty good about participating in a lot of events and activities.
  - Winona is unique in it's openness and acceptance of others...although we are certainly not perfect in this regard. Also, education is valued here and our often testy responses to public issues seems to me an indication that this is a community that is engaged and concerned and willing to share their point of view.
3. Winona is home to a vibrant mix of people. Selected comments:
- That all important mix of high and low brow - the gamut of the human experience.
  - The many people that fully embrace and advocate for what they care about. For some that means rooting for a steady job and weekends fishing. For some that means rooting for the arts and culture. For some that means rooting for the underdog and fighting for others. For some that means... et... That's what I think makes us stand out: a lot of people rooting for a lot of good things.
  - Its uniqueness, as a community supporting a wide variety of enterprises, interests, recreational pursuits, arts venues... Unusually energetic in all of those, for a town its size, I think.
  - We have a diversity of social classes and political leanings that are forced to work together. Everyone comes together around outdoor activities.
  - It's the connection. We are all up in each other's business as a small town. But, we are each other's business as a small town, so it makes us accountable to each other.
  - nurtured all sorts of weird people - haven for eccentrics - un-Rochester, which is a wonderful thing
4. People in Winona love Winona. Selected comments:
- Residents are aware of what makes it unique and OWNS it.
  - We are a small community that values our people, businesses, nature and history.
  - The community values local, organic food, supports local artists, and celebrates local cultural offerings. The community values the local outdoor recreational opportunities.
  - There is a feeling people encounter here - a sense of magical winonanness

### **Dreams for Winona's future - related to community**

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 29 comments were about community. A small selection of comments is included here, with the full set of comments in the appendix.

- More smiling people! People who are happy and healthy and respect one another. More playgrounds, and people spending time together around town and on trails. Growth in diversity of cultures and ethnicities and people blended together.
- A great place for everyone to get along and not be judged according to your race , everyone would take time to get to know each other instead of passing judgement by looks and akin color
- A place where people from all walks of life feel safe and supported. Streets are safe to walk on. Diversity is celebrated. WAGES ARE LIVING WAGE or better!



- Equitable. All people have access to healthcare and decent housing... and all people are respected. Resources are used to help people develop to their potential rather than punish & incarcerate.
- Winona looks like a welcoming, vibrant community with mixed living/business space in a historic downtown. It looks integrated in that people of racial/ethnic/socio-economic diversity live in shared spaces where lives intersect. It is a model for promoting systems thinking, for building compassionate community spaces and a spot for outdoor adventure.
- I envision that Winona could become an inter-connected community, not only for getting around, but in regards to helping people and organizations connect better. We could be a more welcoming community that thrives on its acceptance of all people. In turn filling jobs and creating diversity in cultural/economic opportunities in Winona.

## **Environment - Winona has a unique natural setting and physical beauty. (217 comments)**

**This includes taking care of Winona's environment so future generations can enjoy it.**

Key themes related to environment:

1. The Mississippi River. Selected comments:
  - a. I've worked in 32 states - whenever i'm close to the mississippi river, I feel at home
  - b. Landscape - unique position on the river, island city, bluffs, lake, trees. That's a big attraction for people to come here and live here
  - c. -the water flows by us
  - d. how it's woven into the river and bluffs
2. Natural areas in the region. Selected comments:
  - a. Public land access in surrounding areas - vinegar ridge, snake creek, zumbro bottoms, within 30 min. If you don't grow up here you don't necessarily know where they are
  - b. I love the picturesque landscapes--I love the bluffs, the water, lake park. mississippi river. we're living in an amazing part of the country, and that's our number one asset.
  - c. I saw some tundra swans the other day - gorgeous
3. Stewardship. Selected comments:
  - a. That most of us who live here cherish our natural environment and are committed to protecting, enhancing, and enjoying it.
  - b. That we don't take our surroundings for granted. We KNOW we live in a beautiful community and are proud of that.

### **Dreams for Winona's future - related to environment**

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 25 participants referenced Winona's natural environment in their dreams for Winona's future. A small selection of comments is included here, with the full set of comments in the appendix.

- There are community gardens scattered all over town. Anyone can walk or bike to a nearby neighborhood garden. Walking, biking and public transport predominate. The giant parking lots all have rain gardens and aren't overwhelming the storm drains. The lakes are clean and



swimmable. Housing is available to everyone. Big trucks don't drive through downtown. The box stores have solar panel on them and are providing much of the electricity they use. You don't get stuck waiting for trains on Mankato and Hamilton.

- solar on roof tops of WSU and big box stores, walking trails easy from river to lake, trains not blocking interesections for a long time
- More accessible public transport options (more people walking, biking, ride sharing, and taking public transit), so there's less traffic, noise, and air pollution. Expanded and resource-rich opportunities for outdoor recreation. Affordable childcare for everyone in town that needs it. Less turf grass and more ecologically beneficial planning (native plants, rainwater gardens, meadows of pollinator plantings and native grasses) in our parks. MORE TREES. It deeply saddening that we're letting our tree population decrease so much each year. These measures will increase how well supported our community members are, how beautiful our city is, and how prepared we are to *\*thrive\** in the future.
- More pedestrian traffic, beautiful leafy downtown and neighborhoods, everyone has an affordable place to live, trails connect from Sugar Loaf all the way to St. Mary's trails.

## **Activities - Winona has something for everyone. (195 comments)**

**This includes community arts events, concerts, theater, family-friendly activities, and youth activities.**

Key themes related to activities:

1. Arts. Selected comments:
  - Member of MMAM--that's been one of the great attractions of winona, and Winona is really a center for so many great art events. you've got the beethoven fest, shakespeare, music festivals, mmam, historical society. Those can really be put out there to the broader country and state to let people know that we live in one of the most beautiful parts of minnesota.
  - -engaged community > involved in developing arts and culture > people come from all over for it > mwmf, frff, grsf, etc > prairie island!
  - Arts organizations in the last 20 years have really grown, and from a healthcare perspective that's important - builds resiliency and ways to recharge. Plus there are different outlets for kids and younger residents
  - Aside from the natural beauty, Winona stands out in being a small town with a lot going on-- I love the focus on arts, including music and films. There are so many incredible festivals and ways to get involved and experience art.
2. Not just one thing - Winona offers a diversity of attractions and things to do. Selected comments:
  - More free things to do in the winter has been improving
  - lots of different possibilities - room to explore - play through parks/trails/nature and creatively (arts organizations) - haven't experienced that in other places - accessible
  - That there is actually a lot to do! I've been here since 2002 as a college kid and now a family and I feel it's really improved with more to come.



- This place always feels like home, the river is close by, there's a variety of outdoor activities to do here. You have an option to shop local or big box stores. It has a good variety of things to choose from.
  - It has a lot of options for everyone--from very right wing/conservative groups/ churches/ schools to much more liberal ones.
  - Access to the arts and culture, outdoors, great education from preK through graduate school... things like an indoor tennis center and arts conservatory are pretty amazing for example in a town of this size
3. Family-friendly events and activities. Selected comments:
- I didn't appreciate this until I became a parent and saw all the fun things. it feels like a good place for my kids.
  - -diverse families and family traditions--Jeny Kochany, Brew and Q, Polish, Dakota gathering
  - Youth programs are unique - theater arts, dance, sports - skating, lacrosse, nordic ski, mountain biking, 4H. Options are there, but maybe not widely known
  - The events that bring everyone together.

### **Dreams for Winona's future - related to activities**

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 27 participants referenced activities for all ages in their dreams for Winona's future. A small selection of comments is included here, with the full set of comments in the appendix.

- There is a tough dichotomy between retirement community and college student here. I would love to see a community that embraces their heritage, while also pushing to keep a younger generation here. It's a great community to come to school in, great to retire in, but there isn't much in between for young adults and families.
- Lots of activities regularly - arts, food, family. Bike friendly, lots of ethnic food options, regular tourism to draw people here from our downtown culture
- Endless cultural events, accessibility for many languages and abilities, thriving young families, and tons of block parties.
- Ideally there will be more free family friendly community events. Many events are good for kids OR adults. Not too often events for all ages. Also seems to be a lot of focus on the Arts. Arts are great! But not always kid friendly.

## **Livability - Winona is livable and attractive. (175 comments)**

**This includes housing choice and community services that support health and well-being.**

Key themes related to livability:

1. Lots to love. Selected comments:
  - The outdoor recreation potential, the blend of historic & contemporary architecture and of course, the unique entrepreneurial spirit of our citizens.



- I love the potential of Winona/Keoxa, and I really believe in our community. We are a small town with enough resources to be culturally expansive, diverse, and to grow to meet the challenges that our current time demands.
  - Opportunities to engage, learn and stay connected.
  - The environment. Physical, economic and social.
  - The fact that it is so diverse. And I really love the art aspect of the city. Also the beauty of the area and the fact that you don't have to go far to be in the midst of this beauty.
2. Community institutions, services, and programs in Winona, both public and private, support health and well-being. Selected comments:
- A small town environment/community with access to exceptional healthcare and education systems
  - Winona has the capacity to realize great things. At times it has focused development on building systems around such important ways of living as compassion. There is great access to education, art, nature, and social/community activism in the area.
  - within the last five years, there's been awareness increasing of the homeless and the hungry. I don't know what the plans are of the warming center, but I've seen the day center open - that's a new thing. grace place house, the food shelf and clothing store.
3. Winona is a regional hub, and close enough to major cities. Selected comments:
- The location - its picturesque, has a small town feel, but is not far from bigger cities.
  - Geographic location - access to the Cities, La Crosse, Rochester, the Great River Road
  - We've got Goodview out there and Lewiston, St. Charles, Rollingstone- we all make a difference when we are asked, and we contribute as a whole to the county

### **Dreams for Winona's future - related to livability**

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 97 participants referenced holistic livability and community services in their dreams for Winona's future. Many of these comments were wide-ranging, covering multiple themes. A small selection of comments is included here, with the full set of comments in the appendix.

- our schools are strong, we have even more varied and fun recreational opportunities (tennis tournaments, more swimming opportunities, bike pump track, silly races, community sled/ tubing parties, more ice rinks, mini ski hills to learn basic snowboarding/ skiing before you hit bigger area hills, just more clinics in general for people to dip their toe in the water of new sports, etc) we have a clean town, we have fun, different stuff to do every weekend, & we have amazing restaurants to eat at
- A tourist hot spot because of its bustling arts scene! Everyone is housed and has sufficient resources! All neighbors feel seen and heard and a sense of belonging!
- Consistent branding in the format of lighting, roads without potholes and signage that's vibrant and identifiable. These are simple details that make a huge impression to visitors and a much needed improvement for locals who pay taxes. A fully staffed police department. Equity and diversity in hiring at all levels. Consistent growth that works for all citizens. A senior complex that isn't a rehash of recycled ideas. A library that isn't limited by access issues. Finish the levee by installing some shade structures so people actually use it daily! Permanent structure portico





for the farmers market. It's not rocket science. The city already knows what's popular and supported. Embrace it and support it. Help it grow.

## **Small-town feel - Winona has a small geographic size and a small-town feel with big-city amenities. (164 comments)**

**This includes a general feeling of safety, heritage, and ease of getting around.**

Key themes related to small-town feel:

1. Small geographic size, with access to points of interest on foot, by bike, and by car. Selected comments:
  - The best thing about winona is that everyone can walk to a park, but the reason it's nice is because you meet other people from all walks of life there.
  - -landlocked- no sprawl- we have to look at each other a lot
  - Proximity of resources - do everything in a short period of time. More free time!
  - can walk/bike almost anywhere in town (in less than an hour)
  - -easy to navigate (though train is "problematic")
  - We don't have to go that far to get to where we need. Within a small radius there's a lot to do.
  - When I lived on west campus here, I was able to bike most everywhere in town just as fast as driving.
  - The bluffs and river. Not only do they provide access to nature, wildlife, recreation, sustenance, learning, etc. but they also serve as protective barriers and discourage urban sprawl. Winona's population has tapered since the 1960's and helped the community retain its small river town feel.
2. Small-town feel - you see people you know, and traffic is manageable. Selected comments:
  - size too - applicable to local government, bound to run into a local official at the grocery store, bound to know their brother or cousin. way different than living in a big city.
  - safety - kids can wander, come home at dark
  - not too heavy traffic
  - -size and scale are actual opportunities to align and opportunity to find common ground in today's world- a chance to model
  - -wonderful that we have a small community—it makes it feel that change is possible—sometimes that means gatekeeping—but change is not far-fetched.
  - The size - it's small enough that you can know your neighbors and your merchants, etc., but large enough that it has amenities (and you don't have to see the same people every day if you don't want to).
  - -quality of life - work life balance - small community you can participate in it
3. Heritage - comments relating to Winona's historic neighborhoods and rich history. Selected comments:
  - Sense of a unique community that doesn't feel like another suburb - why I moved from the cities and decided to land here.



- preserve the odd little neighborhood quirks - keep the neighborhood bars - too bad we lost all the neighborhood groceries - they are identifiable in the neighborhoods
- Winona has a lot of historic buildings that are still here - and there's more energy around that - that's a huge amount of value here - not all lost to urban renewal
- I really enjoy how much we have embraced our history and small town feel, but feel that we either have "small town" or "industrial" there isn't much in between for the young adult/family
- there's a value in the size we are, emphasis on old family values to a certain extent, not the chaos of a big city but the benefits - theater, arts, etc.

### **Dreams for Winona's future - related to small-town feel**

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 18 comments referenced Winona's small-town feel, safety, and ease of getting around in their dreams for Winona's future. A small selection of comments is included here, with the full set of comments in the appendix.

- Still small, but vibrant with young people staying to live here.
- hopefully the same! Winona is a cute little town that shows where modern meets historic and I hope that some of it's history will be preserved. It's a town that also has a lot of outdoor space for recreational activities and it would be nice to see more of that, but Winona offers a lot in that department as well.
- Small town scenic route, rich in history and culture. Not overrun by big businesses or schools.
- Much the same with 3000 more people, and safer streets
- A lot like it does now. Why change good stuff?
- Same as it does now, don't want it to grow anymore
- Walkable and bikeable from any point in the city
- I like it the way it is! No major changes needed. Just keep up with technology. Maintain economic opportunity.

## **Recreation - Winona has access to outdoor recreation and parks. (139 comments)**

**This includes trails, playgrounds, and other amenities.**

Key themes related to recreation:

1. Winona has a wide range of opportunities to enjoy parks, with something for everyone. Selected comments:
  - a. people appreciate the beauty - look at how many people are on the lake path at all hours of the day
  - b. Lake Winona - easier to access and navigate than the river, something you can recreate in. paddle, fish, enjoy the water. Year-round activities too with skating.
  - c. the bluffs - that ribbon of dirt through the woods touches me - when I die my ashes will go on holzinger trail - opportunities are there!
  - d. -fishing, boating -river recreation



- e. All the outdoor rec opportunitie. Climbing, hiking, ice climbing, kayaking, mountain biking, fishing, canoeing, camping.
  - f. I love our beautiful area, so much nature to explore. I am not a serious hiker, but I love the walking trails and so many parks for families.
2. Outdoor recreation brings tourists to Winona. Selected comments:
  - a. Tight in Valley, as an island- people respond to that - 75% of those (who come) are coming to hike and outdoors. That's a huge asset
  - b. We get a ton of tourists - our outdoor space is a huge asset. The amount of people that come to Winona for the ice park, and where they come from, is impressive.
3. Access is easy - if you know where to go. Selected comments:
  - a. Natural beauty and accessibility of those things- easy to get there, right there- geog. Small
  - b. Trails have improved- access is still a local secret- hard to explain
  - c. interesting that you wouldn't know the sugarloaf trail is there until you get there - no obvious sign
  - d. nature - grew up on the river - boathouse, paddling, hiking - keep that accessible
  - e. I love living in a place where I can access activity and natural resources easily.

### **Dreams for Winona's future - recreation**

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 8 participants referenced recreation only in their dreams for Winona's future, and many more combined it with other ideas. A small selection of comments is included here, with the full set of comments in the appendix.

- Winona is a regional destination for outdoor activities - hiking, mountain biking, trail running, kayaking, canoeing, xc skiing, etc.
- Mountain biking trail sugar loaf to cherry hill. A toilet at every boat landing.
- Even more outdoor trails with people coming from all around the Us to explore them and to partake in events on the trails
- The fields at the lake would be youth fields instead of adult slow pitch fields.
- Winona should have a dome for sports teams to play all year round and Winona should have another ice arena for more teams to practice at once along with that Winona should have more paved trails and better marked trails so community members can get outside

## **Economy - Winona a robust, varied economy. (135 comments)**

**This includes entrepreneurship, innovation, and infrastructure.**

Key themes related to Winona's economy:

1. Employment opportunity and diverse economic base. Selected comments:
  - a. So many oportunites for employment. There are so many world wide businesses in this town.
  - b. Our small town vibe with large city opportunities. You can appreciate a lovely environment but also have amazing job opportunities at local businesses.



- c. Self-sustainability. This community has fared very well during tough times because of its diverse, well developed work force.
  - d. Diversity of business - county seat, 3 higher ed institutions, numerous manufacturers, plastics sector, fastenal, hospital. Compared to similar sized towns, we're fortunate.
  - e. Health Organizations: Winona Health, Gundersen, Hiawatha Valley Mental Health
2. Thriving locally-owned businesses, with a culture of giving back. Selected comments:
  - a. The ability to have access to nature in a place that is affordable yet there are opportunities to own a business and provide for ones family. (Speaking to my own experience in Winona.)
  - b. people who care about keeping the town relevant and at the forefront of recreational and art opportunities, as well as business owners' willingness to invest in the town
  - c. Winona's become home to brilliant organizations and people, and has allowed for interesting growth in all aspects of cultural and business opportunities.
  - d. It starts with a strong business first. For someone to have a large impact with their generosity, they need to have something substantial to give away.
3. Partnerships and collaboration. Selected comments:
  - a. Chamber is strong in supporting and recruiting new businesses, economic development opportunities
  - b. Partnerships are strong - SE Tech/Chamber tree lighting

### **Dreams for Winona's future - economy**

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 69 participants referenced Winona's economy in their dreams for Winona's future. A small selection of comments is included here, with the full set of comments in the appendix.

- More like the bigger cities. Winona needs more! It's already a big town why should we have to go to Rochester or La Crosse to actually go do something. The beach needs to be cleaned up and made safer. Students need more job opportunities as well. Winona can do better and maybe people would stick around longer.
- More variety of restaurants that serve more than just sandwiches, pizza or bar food. More places for adults to hang out other than bars. (The beer garden is great because you don't have to drink to enjoy the space!).
- More career opportunities not just factories. Quality, affordable housing, removal of slum lords. Daycares! The lack of childcare is very troublesome.
- Thriving community that has most of their employees live in town and that businesses have to fight to start up in Winona because this is the place to be

### **Downtown - Winona has a vibrant, historic downtown and riverfront. (87 comments)**

**This includes historic buildings, downtown activities, and updates to Levee Park and the riverfront.**

Key themes related to downtown:



1. Historic buildings. Selected comments:
  - a. Sights, views, historical downtown
  - b. there's been some great projects, like Latsch building, 102 walnut, it seems like there's a lot of development that's preserving buildings. Prior to 05 it seems like people tore down buildings, and now there's more of a focus on reuse of historic buildings.
  - c. -Focus more on historic preservation like Red Wing & La Crosse
  - d. -old spaces, so many gorgeous old spaces that are inaccessible to the average person: could be artist studios, affordable housing, community cafes, a Dakota Center,
  - e. balance of historic nature of winona and (investment) - band shell used to be kind of a joke and now it's really quite attractive - revamping of some of the older buildings. merchants original building is still there and the new parts blend in
2. Downtown momentum and potential. Selected comments:
  - a. I came from a bedroom community - love Levee Park, shops, 3rd and 4th street
  - b. -restaurants and shops will come, but they need to know they'll have customers
  - c. The mississippi river is an asset- post industrial, underutilized- beginning to change in last 10 years- levee project that is paying off
  - d. -so much is changing - hard to see future here without the downtown
  - e. Downtown is becoming more of an asset - it sat idle for a lot of years. Now there are lots of exciting things happening downtown and more to come there as well.
3. Community events downtown. Selected comments:
  - a. The levee park and music art cultural events
  - b. efforts to add new life and energy to the downtown area. businesses AND experiences. these third street events, which bring business and provide opportunities for people to be outdoors downtown. always something to do.
  - c. community feeling I get when I'm down at the (farmers) market - people are meeting each other, getting to know the farmers

### **Dreams for Winona's future**

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 84 participants referenced Winona's downtown and riverfront in their dreams for Winona's future. A small selection of comments is included here, with the full set of comments in the appendix.

- Galena, Illinois. The downtown is preserved historically, 60 unique boutiques with swarms of shoppers and restaurants.
- A River frontage restaurant and boats being able to stop for supper somewhere
- It might look similar to what it does now, but the downtown is even more vibrant with activity (not just stores), there are more pedestrians and bikers, and the city has invested in infrastructure that benefits all Winonans, not just Winonans with money.
- The riverfront is a model of public land use with open views of the river and a large, public gathering point for small open markets, concerts, theater, childrens events. A well designed public building close to the river could house many of these events as well.
- Tons of people downtown every day of the week. A riverfront walk that gets used because there is so much to see and do. A convention center that hosts concerts, art fairs, etc. a true multi use



facility. A new police station. A new Fire Station. A new Central Garage. Updated library. New and improved, larger Lake Lodge.

## Education - Winona supports lifelong learning. (56 comments)

This includes E-12 and higher education.

Key themes related to education:

1. Winona has a variety of E-12 and higher ed options. Selected comments:
  - a. The fact that we have 3 higher ed institutions. and for a city our size, that's rare. get those credentials right here in winona.
  - b. i didn't know bluffview was the first charter school in the nation 30 years ago - appreciate a good variety of school choices
  - c. Cotter brings in international students
2. Higher education institutions fuel economic activity, along with sports and cultural activities. Selected comments:
  - a. higher education: support the 2 Universities and 1 Technical School because they provide for a skilled workforce and improve the overall quality of life with their classes, sports and art events
  - b. born and raised in Winona. We bought the house I grew up in. I love the chance to continue lifelong learning here. There are so many opportunities - university, fests, it enriches our lives in so many ways
  - c. the college student population - not sure how to value it more, but it's what brought so many people here - bringing new life to the community
  - d. Universities/higher ed - parents are coming into town to see their students. Buy things

### Dreams for Winona's future

In our survey, we asked folks to dream big and imagine what Winona looks like in 15-20 years. 2 participants referenced education only in their dreams for Winona's future. Another 29 participants referenced education in comments that included many other ideas as well; see the full set of responses in the appendix.

- Our public schools have a higher capture rate and the religious numbers are lower
- People support schools, the tax base is changed to support the schools

### Other comments

In response to the question - *What makes Winona stand out as a community?* - a handful of comments pointed out additional areas for improvement, especially around equity and identity.

- How racist, how intolerant, how judgmental thos this town is on how they treat others. Something that needs to be worked on.
- it doesn't standout. Winona is a community that doesn't promote what it has. Way to many people that don't want anything to change.



- City has blinders on. Can't see how the city's up and down the river are improving
- Expensive rent
- Old money
- The fact that it's full of drugs, nothing but factories, and lakes. It's a boring town with nothing to do in it.
- That when you drive over the beautiful Mississippi, you are surrounded by a jail and parking lots.
- Monona is a beautiful community. However, what makes Winona stand out is the large gap between social classes, neighborhoods, and sub population groups, especially minorities.

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## Part 2: Ideas + issues

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### Responses to 10 topics and 3 overarching themes

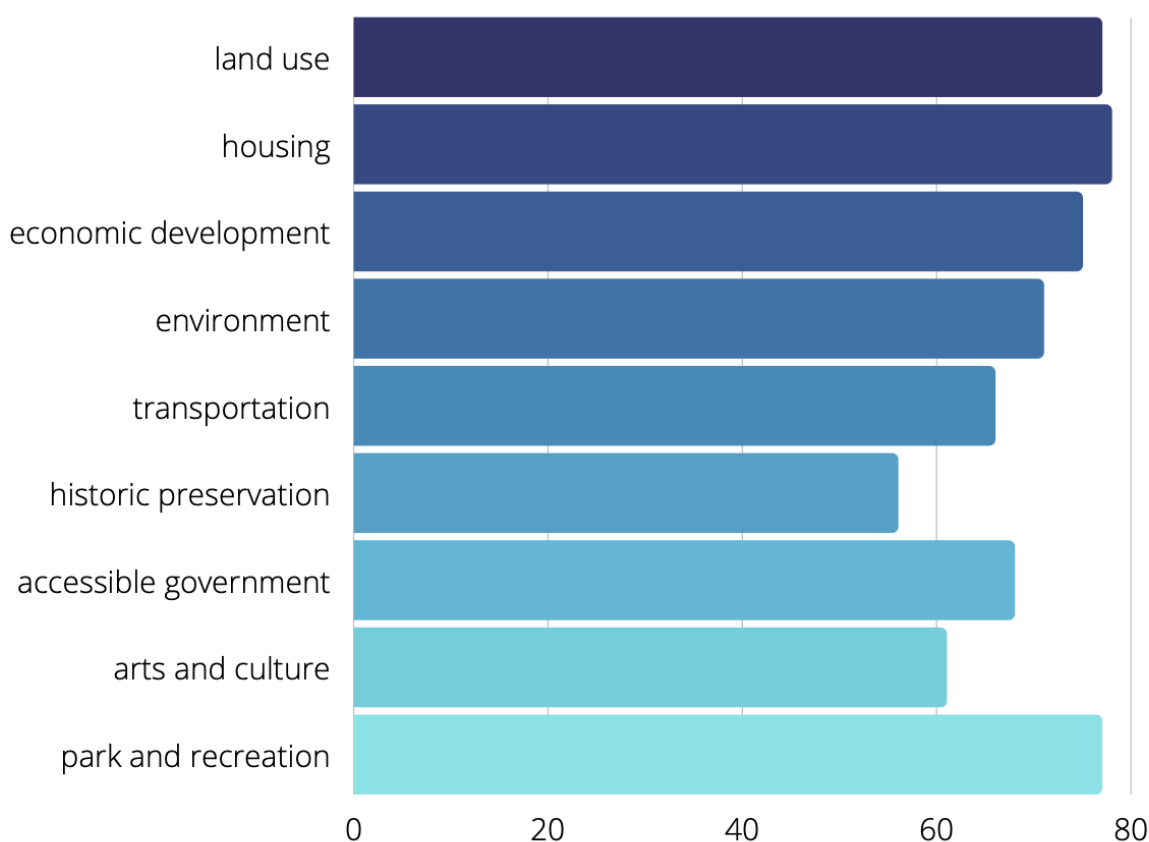
We invited participants to rate how important the comprehensive plan's topics were to them. We also invited residents to rate the importance of the plan's three overarching themes:

- Equity: providing viable options and opportunities to help people reach their full potential
- Sustainability: creating a resilient city that is a desirable place for future generations to live, work, and play
- Technology: incorporating innovation into city operations to make services more effective, efficient, and accessible

#### Analysis

In our survey, we presented the comprehensive plan topics and asked, "How important is it for the City of Winona to work on each of these issues?" Folks could select extremely, very, somewhat, not so much, or not at all important. We received about 620 responses for each topic. The graph below shows the percentage of "extremely important" + "very important" responses for each topic. The top three topics were housing, with 78% reporting it as extremely or very important, followed by land use and park and recreation, both with 77%. The bottom 3 topics were historic preservation (56% extremely or very important), arts and culture (61% extremely or very important), and transportation (66% extremely or very important).





86% of respondents viewed historic preservation as at least somewhat important, along with 88% for arts and culture and 91% for transportation.

42 respondents provided additional comments on this question. Some comments were about parks and playgrounds, mentioning park maintenance, recreation centers, and inclusivity. Comments about housing mentioned options for families and seniors. Comments about transportation included parking, walkability, road maintenance, and traffic flow. Others touched on the importance of downtown improvements, arts activities, accessible government, and land use.

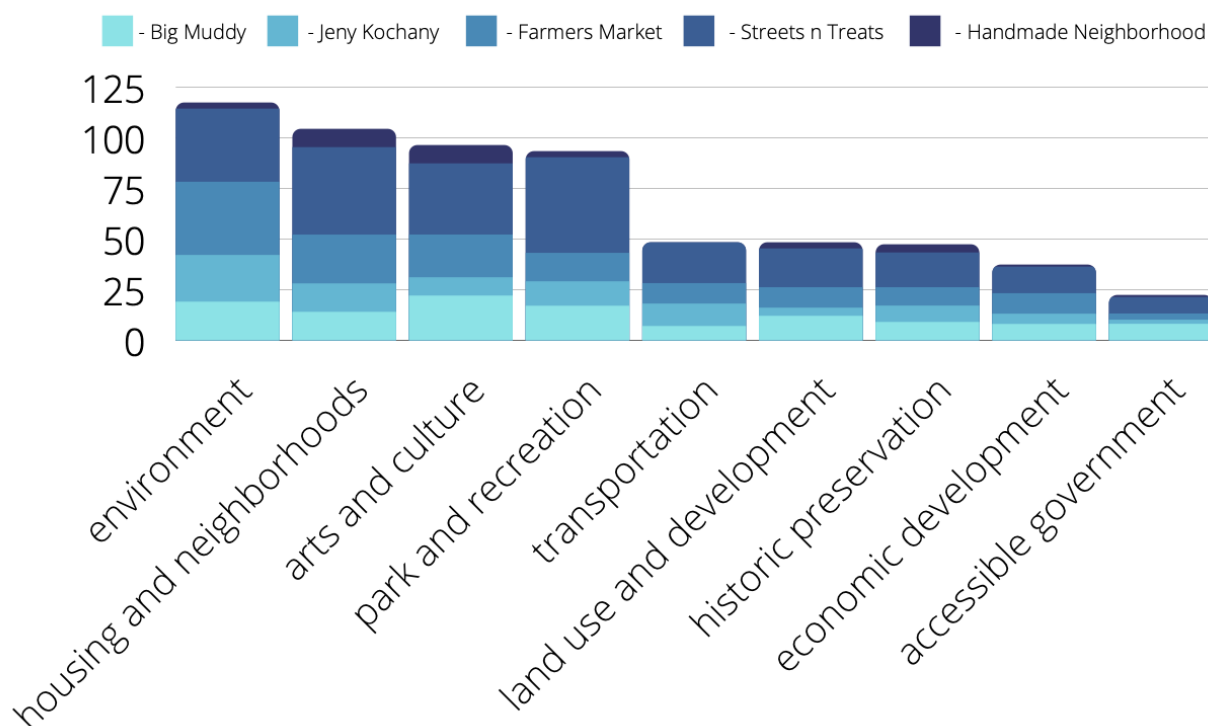
A note about topics: The final comprehensive plan will have 10-12 topics. In Phase 1, we asked folks about the 9 topics that have been defined so far. Future engagement phases will include the Transformative Projects topic, along with additional topics that emerged during Phase 1 engagement.

**We also brought this question to our pop-up events.**



We asked folks at pop-up events to put a gemstone in a jar for the three topics that were most important to them.

## Top 3 topics - popup booth

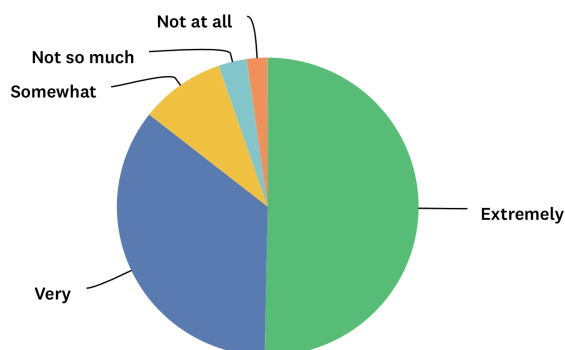


## Three overarching themes

We asked survey participants to tell us how important each of the plan's three overarching themes were to them. We received about 620 responses for each theme.

**Equity** - providing viable options and opportunities to help people reach their full potential

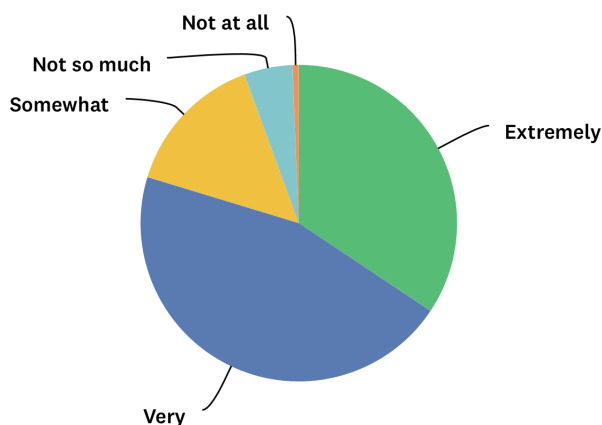
**94% of respondents said equity was at least somewhat important.**





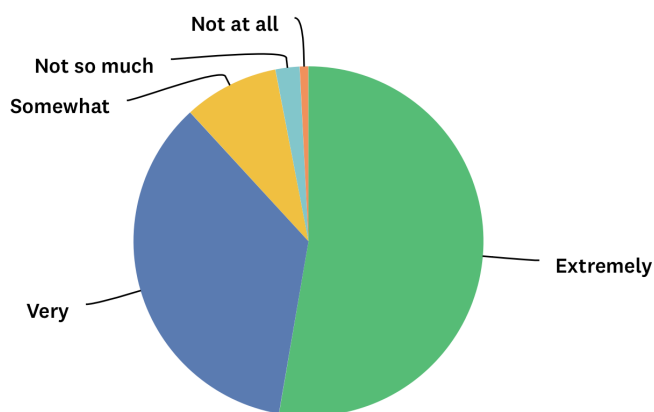
**Technology** - incorporating innovation into city operations to make services more effective, efficient, and accessible

**94% of respondents said technology was at least somewhat important.**



**Sustainability** - creating a resilient city that is a desirable place for future generations to live, work, and play

**97% of respondents said sustainability was at least somewhat important.**



## How is the City of Winona doing in each topic area?

We asked survey participants to tell us how they felt the city was doing in each topic area. 628 participants answered this question, choosing from excellent, very good, okay, needs improvement, and don't know.



The topics with the highest performance were park and recreation (59% excellent or very good), arts and culture (59% excellent or very good), and historic preservation (44% excellent or very good). Topics with the lowest performance were housing (48% needs improvement), transportation (34% needs improvement), economic development (26% needs improvement), and land use (26% needs improvement).

80 participants provided additional comments in response to this question. 16 comments were about parks, mentioning issues like access and affordability for youth, more dog parks, more playgrounds across the community, and a new senior center. Another 12 comments referenced economic development, with attention to downtown and riverfront improvements and a balanced approach to historic preservation. 10 comments were about transportation, with reference to street improvements, bus service, and safety improvements for people walking and biking. Other comments addressed inclusion of diverse residents, community building, and regional connections and collaborations.

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## Ideas + issues, by topic

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### **What are your ideas for Winona's future? What issues need to be addressed?**

#### **Overview**

In the survey, map, pop-up events, and conversations, we asked folks to think about their future in Winona, and imagine the community they'd like to live in. We asked them what issues need to be addressed to make it happen. Below, we unpack what we heard around each comprehensive plan topic area, along with some additional topics that emerged directly during community engagement.

1. Transportation
2. Community services and institutions, including education
3. Housing and neighborhoods
4. Economic development
5. Historic downtown
6. Equity
7. Park and recreation



8. Identity
  9. Environment
  10. Arts and Culture
  11. Land Use
  12. Other, multiple

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.
- **Connections to values**
- **Key issues and ideas:** Condensing, discussing the most common input and ideas for the topic.
- **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.

## Transportation

Responses about transportation covered a variety of topics, from crosswalks to stop signs to trucks, trains, and river traffic. Responses focused on broad improvements to road safety and lighting, signage, and traffic flow. Mankato Avenue, Highway 61, and Broadway were mentioned with most frequency as areas with safety concerns for all modes of transportation. We received 296 comments about transportation in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona’s future.

### Connections to values

Transportation across all modes, from walking to boat traffic, matters to Winona’s shared values of livability, economy, and ease of getting around, and comprehensive plan themes of equity and sustainability.

### Key issues and ideas

1. Safety. Respondents who walk and bike to get to work, shopping, or recreation areas appreciated Winona’s geographic size and flat streets. They commented on a variety of barriers to safe walking and biking.
  - I’m kind of disappointed in the broadway project, and I just think Lake City is so lovely, and pedestrians can cross. I had a friend that was hit on broadway. Right now it’s kind of a speedway. That was very disappointing, I thought that was going to happen, and I think that’s a disadvantage. that was a mistake to get rid of that program, plus the street needs fixing. the major things in my mind are the people.
  - pedestrian safety is the other huge thing that gets me really riled up. it should be so easy to bike in this town - it’s flat and small. but I don’t bike because there’s not a bikeway



- that's obvious. we should never share parking and biking lanes. sarnia would be great - it's super wide but both sides are used for parking.
- Parts of winona are walkable, and parts are not. The lake access is great, but you can't walk from SE tech to the Y, for example. It's a little bit sketchy, and I don't have mobility issues.
  - all the time cars encroach on bikers, constantly cutting corners
  - One of the more difficult places to cross. The flashing lights are confusing and annoying for drivers who have a stoplight or a long uninterrupted stretch of road right in front of them. There needs to be a way to slow down traffic on Broadway in the areas with no stoplights or four way stops.
2. Wayfinding. Respondents noted that signage is not present to direct residents and tourists to points of interest.
- updated signage is really needed, the signage in a lot of our heavily used trails. assets like the flyway trail connector with little to no signage. that would make a huge difference if it were prioritized. signage--how far, distances and how much time it would take to get somewhere.
  - I would love to see a hub for transportation: cab, bus, train, nice waiting room with a place to eat and find information. have that all be in one place that looks attractive and is clean and that is open.
  - It is great that Dahl cooperated in making the trails extend through the parking lot, but getting from Vila street to the trail connector through the parking lot needs a dedicated sidewalk or path, as well as better signage.
3. Access to areas of interest. Along with wayfinding signage, respondents noted that shopping areas on Mankato Avenue and Highway 61 are difficult to access without a car. In addition, respondents mentioned that having another East End access point for the shopping and industrial areas could help reduce pressure on Mankato Avenue.
- look at the infrastructure and how it impacts how students can travel to downtown, to the lakes, to target and hyvee. it's a little tricky to bike to a lot of those places. even the MMAM, there's not a great non-vehicular way to get out there.
  - i am a fan of the louisa street extension to 61. there was a referendum on that about 10-15 years ago. get folks to the stores, who come to town for that. working in the east end, I can see how it would be good to extend louisa street through and help traffic flow a bit better
  - Broadway Road Diet would connect the majority of our population with the downtown district that we have been focusing on invigorating for years.
  - Putting a side walk to connect the existing sidewalk in front of the hy-vee parking lot to Gilmore Ave, in front of Altra to connect to the existing sidewalk by express employment would GREATLY improve pedestrian safety. This connects a neighborhood to groceries, a bus stop, and other destinations.
4. Transportation equity. Respondents pointed out that walking, biking, and public transit help people access jobs, shopping, and community events. These kinds of transportation are especially important to teens, older adults, and anyone who does not have access to a vehicle.
- Transportation - it's really complicated for people to get around on public transit. It can take an hour to get someplace.



- We have a major state highway running along the town - it's terrific to have but it is also a huge barrier for people who are not in a car.
  - bus used to stop at walmart and target, now it drops farther away - hard to carry bags in snow - used to be able to wait inside
  - Safe transportation. Public transit improvement, dedicated bike lanes, safe crossings for highway 61, and sidewalks in more neighborhoods with out them. Prioritize different types of transportation in different areas. We have prioritized only automobile traffic, which marginalizes anyone without a car - and keeps many people in poverty.
  - Senior Citizens and partially handicapped need better transportation options not only for regular life but need to get the chance to be included in the big events.
  - it is inconvenient for us (teens) too when you have to drive us around
  - No bus lines run out there (to maplewood), put as far away from the end of the city as they could. far away from anything for people who need to walk to get groceries. an island that is inaccessible and cut off from our community.
5. General street improvements. Respondents commented on a need to keep up with street maintenance, lighting, and streetscape improvements. Some respondents were concerned about navigating the new roundabouts on Mankato Avenue, while others suggested more roundabouts to help traffic flow at intersections throughout Winona.
- transportation: Important to continue an annual Infrastructure program/project to continue to reconstruct/improve city streets. (This is considered an Investment in the community and, again, important to the Bond rating agencies.)
  - not only the road diet, but lights at night. our streets at night are not very well lit. there's got to be a low pollution way to provide more lighting. even 43 approach from I-90.
  - -make streets and sidewalks more inviting, parking easier to access
  - The intersection of Huff and Sarnia needs a total rethinking. Cars, trucks and semis regularly run red lights, and frequently disobey noise pollution ordinances. Huff Street going toward Lake Park becomes a drag strip, and is unsafe for children to play around. A roundabout would force all vehicles to slow down as they approach the intersection, and would offer the opportunity for the City to put a monument, statue, garden etc. that would welcome people into town.
  - roundabouts are confusing to some people - people don't use turn signals in roundabouts which is dangerous for bikers
  - Drop 2 roundabouts and get an overpass
6. Rail and truck traffic. Winona is a hub for rail and truck transportation, with an interstate highway and several rail lines. Respondents suggested ideas for addressing traffic issues related to train and truck activity.
- the train - the notification signs are too close to give you an opportunity to go a different way
  - get past the RR crossing issue - use infrastructure money for that - cost might be insurmountable
  - Railroad overpass on Louisa Street incorporating an extension and new signalled intersection with Highway 61 along with extending a 4 lane road from Highway 43 to I-90.





- Working with the RRs about their 2+ mile trains. Relocating or diverting? Fat chance Major irritant for many.
  - Making the riverfront more accessible. The tracks are a real deterrent to attracting people to the Levee.
  - How about a Winona app that shows the status of each RR signal in town? Put an accumulated timer on each activated signal so we know how long it's been blocked & whether to avoid it. The app could do more, & be useful for visitors too
  - Highway speed limit doesn't change to 30 until at the bridge bottom. This encourages truckers to violate the "jake brake" prohibition within city limits. We could follow La Crosse's example where the in-town speed limit applies to the entirety of their downtown river bridges. Or we could start enforcing noise laws for all types of motor vehicles throughout the city.
  - truck routes are also residential streets. big truck traffic downtown, corner of 4th and main gets tight sometimes.
7. Regional and state connections. Respondents noted that Winona is located just 1-2 hours away from several metro areas, and future plans should incorporate regional connections.
- having access to shuttles to la crosse and rochester, bike routes and lanes, wayfinding signage
  - more effective rail service between the cities, winona, chicago - trains go right into the city and make it more convenient (than flying)
  - A more organized and cleaner looking port would put forth a better impression of how we care for City and spaces that are directly adjacent to the Mississippi.
  - Sustainable, meaningful transportation options in rural communities - build on the resources of the region, cooperate with other entities, be interconnected with other small cities. Consider the overlap with overall rural SE MN, and this could reduce the expense.

## Community services and institutions

Community services and institutions support the well-being and education of Winona residents. While not one of the initial 10 comprehensive plan topics, this topic emerged strongly in the engagement as an opportunity for the city to support the well-being of residents through its own community services and facilities, along with partnerships and collaborations with other institutions and organizations. We received 236 comments about community services in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future. We'll also unpack 35 comments about education in the section below.

### Connections to values

Community services connect to values of livability, lifelong learning, and community. This topic also connects to the comprehensive plan theme of equity.

### Issues and ideas

1. Community spaces. Participants mentioned spaces for kids from early childhood through teens, along with spaces for older adults.
  - -defunding the library is very unfortunate—it decreases access to resources



- more resources, more afterschool programming
  - don't look at teens as a problem, they get a bad rap - look at them as having a purpose, not a problem
  - connection with other people is how people are staying sober. it would be a lot more beneficial to get rid of the stigma of once an addict, always an addict if we could get the community more involved in these meetings for connection.
  - a lot for kids, but once you graduate there are outdoor activities - but there are not many indoor activities
  - i value the friendship center as a senior - I loved the plan that was intergenerational. we have met people (retirees) who've moved here just for that - at some point we need a place that is reasonable for a friendship center that has daylight
  - -services for families and young people more than services to incarcerate
  - I've always dreamt about having an indoor park - like in Edina, edinburgh park, merged with senior apartments. 3-story atrium with trees, plants, pool, basketball, 3-story climbing wall - for stay at home parents in the winter, having some place to go - hook that up with early childhood family education program.
2. Better communication and citizen involvement in city programming and decisionmaking.
- general city updates on social media
  - building relationship with law enforcement
  - more teen or youth-focused things in government, so we get interested
  - Further collaboration and sharing of resources within the community. Listening sessions, are we addressing the community
  - Sticking points: for me as a common citizen, where do I go with my concerns, opportunities, small things like tree branches. I never felt like the city really wanted to hear from me, so I don't call them anymore. It's never been received in a welcome manner, even though I get that they can't be everywhere, and I'm trying to help out. Money and resources are always a part of it. Having enough staff - I'm sure that limits what they can do.
3. Community spaces that are open more hours, and located across the city. Participants also noted that bathroom facilities are not present in many of Winona's community gathering spaces, and gaps remain in safety and services for people experiencing homelessness.
- -seems like the city is consolidating to big playgrounds vs small, local playground - big equity issue- access points
  - We have really good businesses and attractions, but physically it's not comfortable to enter this town - where is the bathroom, the changing table, the signs. Think about tourism, bikes, water fountains, and safety.
  - Too many drugs- worry I will be robbed- we have been robbed and kicked at the levee at night- it is not safe there at night
4. Trust, transparency, and access to government
- you still can't make public comment at city council, you can't show up to a meeting and present an idea. hope that is resolved soon. allow people to show up at your meeting
  - it seems as though Fastenal gets to decide what happens to land, buildings, our river view. i think the community should have more say, and not just rich white men with money. there are VERY passionate people of all ages working to make more beauty and justice



- here, and it is so discouraging to see how the town doesn't encourage this passion, especially when it's young people.
- Some way for the city to have steps for how to get what you need. Here's how you do this, here's how you reach out to us. easier to contact and help walk people through. we are in this major growth period at (my business). I think I remember the founders having to fight to even have a brewery downtown, some kind of restriction in the code.
  - -seems weird we elect officials to represent us who don't seem to care what we think/don't ask/listen—send back a form letter instead
  - accountability for city council - their decisions need to match the strategic plan, and they need to have a better knowledge of public service and how economic development, planning, finances all work. accountability - if they're not really looking at what's best for the community, accountability there.
5. Excellence in programming, with metrics to track outcomes.
- Measurements and outcomes to ensure a clear understanding of needs and how to support those needs.
  - evaluations - the city of winona does not do program evaluation, build metrics into programs
6. Collaborations and partnerships to address mental health, substance abuse, poverty, and more.
- many philanthropic opportunities. I'm part of the WCF, and lots of requests come in for services I didn't even know existed. how do we make those services more broadly accessible? lots of services like habitat, food banks, medical clinics, for a community our size. we're a community rich in resources but not always rich in ways that we communicate that those resources are available. e.g. you don't have to go hungry. you don't have to go without medical services.
  - There's a growing prevalence of youth and adult substance abuse, and I want to create more community options for treatment and support. Those who are suffering, and also their family and friends
  - The city's plan is everybody's plan, so how do they engage and partner with others to ensure that those things are happening?
  - A community support clinic downtown, it would have a CAHOOTS model alternative response team, non-coercive mental health and addiction services, on site support for housing. Community led programming. I know there is money coming from ARPA to support this. There are no longer excuses for our elected officials to do nothing and solely invest in punitive institutions while we sit without these vital resources.

### **Spotlight: Education**

Education also emerged in the engagement as an asset to Winona and an opportunity for improvement. Education was identified as a core value, and it supports other core values like entrepreneurship and community.

### **Ideas and issues**

1. Pathways to success for Winona's youth.



- A partnership between the public schools, the city and business leaders to collaborate in a way that lifts up the working poor. No one entity can do it alone, but a comprehensive program might. <https://swifoundation.org/what-we-do/grow-our-own/>
  - Commitment to improve the public pre-k 12 school system, including programming, quality and facilities.
  - Improvement across the board in education - lots of options, but it's not universally supported and celebrated. Certain groups focus on areas that need to be improved, but there's a lot to celebrate. Intentional about making improvements, and leverage relationships among educational institutions. Improve the narrative, especially for K12
  - High school internship connections- this feels really possible to have during the school day, trade experience→ Build greater relationships within the town, kids identify what they want/enjoy
2. Partnerships and shared planning with local education institutions.
- Winona should strive to maintain its educational facilities, both public and private. At the higher education level, there are fewer residential students than in the past. The comprehensive plan should address what will happen when WSU rebuilds its central campus dormitories. When completed, the new dormitories may allow for less student housing off-campus, enabling the city to convert residences now used for student housing into single or multi-family homes.
  - WSU enrollment- big part of economy- general college enrollment, getting that back
  - Partnerships- buy energy together with the city schools etc. buy in bulk for LEDS etc.

## Housing and neighborhoods

Responses about housing focused on increasing the amount and variety of housing, with an emphasis on affordability for families and working-age folks. There were 209 comments about housing across all responses to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future.

### Connections to values

Housing choice and quality matter to Winona's shared values of livability and economy, and comprehensive plan themes of equity and sustainability.

### Issues and ideas

1. Housing choice. Respondents expressed a need for more housing that meets a variety of needs.
  - Winona needs to concentrate on affordable housing - difficult to find land that can be developed reasonably, especially with the bluffs and the river. Twin homes and quad homes would be advantageous. We hear that housing is expensive here. Sometimes this is a drawback to winona - tough to find a place to live.
  - Winona NEEDS more homes for families especially for those who have walked a bad past and are trying to get back on their feet! It's hard for those like myself and my husband that have a bad past and a record to find a decent place to live. Too many homes for college students and not enough for families in need!
  - 8000 people commute into winona, 11,000 commute out. There seems to be college housing, but what about family housing? Family rentals, starter homes, more housing



- inventory options - many single family homes have been converted into rentals for college students
- Housing. Housing is affordable here in my opinion, but finding a home to purchase was challenging and I would have preferred being able to buy a new-build which was unavailable.
2. Housing quality. Respondents noted that housing quality varies in Winona, and much of the housing that is available is not desirable. The age of Winona's housing stock is of note as well - 40% of housing units in Winona were built in 1939 or earlier.
- Housing-not enough quality homes for everyone. The ones on market are very run down
  - Improve property maintenance codes and compliance inspections.
  - I do think that the housing situation is the one that comes up the most. Rentals are mostly for college kids and they can be gross and are not always taken care of, but the new apartments are too expensive for a single person.
  - Housing being addressed with so many neighborhoods with houses in need of repair and yards a mess
  - housing - very old housing, built before 1900, tree roots cause problems in sewer pipes, leaders have to have a program to rebuild very old houses
  - there are rentals on the edges of the neighborhood - we should encourage landlords to worry about their exterior appearance. and I know it's not just landlords, sometimes it's a homeowner, but I hate driving through town and you can pick out the rental units just by how they look from the outside. some way to incentivize that. that's a sore thumb- a lot of the main roads in town are filled with rental units, and people visiting never get to see other areas of town. (first impression) what we can do to incentivize that - make winona pretty, homes have so many cool architectural features and it would be kind of cool to see that.
3. Historic neighborhoods in the heart of Winona.
- Love to see more single family ownership of homes. Many young families or individuals would like to live in affordable housing in the heart of Winona so they can walk, but they can't find housing so they live outside Winona. Housing is either expensive but not nice, or really expensive and nice, but not affordable.
  - more education (about historic preservation) - not only business owners and people in historic preservation districts, but also education on their responsibility as a property owner in a historic district. more education on behalf of the people who are responsible for making these decisions. When votes would go to the city council, the whole mission of the HPC would have to be described. Council should be more aware of what historic preservation commission does.
  - maybe a historic homeowners group would be helpful - or a historic building group for commercial building owners. Getting support, learning rules and opportunities. Windom park neighborhood has an informal (group like that). build support from fans, and excitement too.
  - WSU selling off three of the old st teresa's buildings - want to see reuse of those. hope demolition by neglect doesn't happen, and someone finds use for them.
  - up in the twin cities, the neighborhoods around the lake area, people tear down a small home and build a bigger home. When people knock down homes, it's important for them



to be rebuilt in the style of the neighborhood. It's important for us to have high standards in our community - all neighborhoods have really cute charm and character and that might apply - have high standards for that type of rebuild or remodel, so it's not just fast/inexpensive. When we're reinvesting in the core of the city, how can we best facilitate that without detriment to neighborhoods.

4. Housing affordability. Respondents noted that both apartment and home prices create barriers for growth.
  - Improved housing that is affordable for manufacturing operators
  - Twin homes, 4-6 unit homes that people can get into. La crosse, onalaska, and holmen do that. It seems to work. 200-300,000 range.
  - new homes being built are too expensive
  - There are lots of nice new rental options, but not everybody wants to rent, and homeownership is still really important to people. Lack of affordable startup housing limits our growth
  - to do that (edu-industry partnership), we need more affordable housing for young professionals and young families. We have this kind of gap here. there's never a middle that really gets on the market. How do we create that 125-150 nice neighborhoods for up and coming professionals.
5. Housing equity. Respondents expressed concern that Winona's housing is segregated by income level, and a desire to see mixed neighborhoods across the city.
  - Housing seems segregated. I don't know this issue through and through, or how to fix it, but I suspect there's a need for more affordable housing all over town instead of in specific areas.
  - Safe and secure permanent housing for low income residents. Public housing is not safe and secure for long term.
  - housing access: MN Supreme Court decision only allow certain number of renter on one block: systemic, racist, classist policy on the books that needs to be removed
  - concentrations of poverty creates more poverty behaviors. i think winona's neighborhoods could relax their covenants and we'd see better outcomes. mixed income reduces property crime and helps people feel like they are in a vibrant place and not stuck there
  - new condos, apartments, should have a certain percentage set aside for working-class affordable or section-8 affordable and required to do that. reduce segregation, and make the community more diverse.
  - winona needs to accept density in some of its developments. be amenable to mixed income housing, so poverty is not concentrated resulting in neighborhood issues. be amenable to apartments.

## Economic development

Responses about economic development were wide-ranging, reflecting Winona's strong, diverse economic base. In response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future, there were 202 comments about economic development.



A note about transformative projects: Future phases of plan development and engagement will identify these projects. For now, we're reporting general ideas that emerged in Engagement Phase 1.

### **Connections to values**

Economic vitality matters to Winona's shared values of livability and entrepreneurship, and comprehensive plan themes of equity, technology, and sustainability.

### **Issues and ideas**

1. Support for entrepreneurs and start-ups.
  - we need a commercial kitchen - (startup) making egg rolls out of her own home. school kitchen could be used for that with more collaborative effort, could bring more things like that
  - -create a market center where folks can start out with a booth
  - the incentives, for a small business it's a big risk, and we want people to be able to take those risks. Some kind of incentive to come and start your business here.
  - Most importantly, the Winona economy should be considered in all parts of the plan. The plan should favor the continued fostering of Winona's entrepreneurial spirit that has been the history of Winona leading to the growth of local start-ups into international companies. Local business expansion should be assisted rather than further regulated. Small businesses should not be burdened with unnecessary codes. Our standard of living is improved if more dollars flow into Winona enterprises from outside of Winona than flow out from Winona's population spending its dollars outside of our community.
  - Business partnerships and cooperatives. It seems like people creating new businesses run into a lot of barriers, limitations to who is around the table. Shared spaces for entrepreneurship
2. Retention of young professionals and workforce.
  - Developing a pipeline to retain college students in fulfilling careers. Most leave after graduating, or can't find gainful employment.
  - Businesses nation wide are dealing with staffing shortages including businesses in Winona.
  - economic support for young people with families... high quality jobs, affordable housing, internet and daycare access, high quality schools
  - Daycare! Especially infant care, it's such a need for people to keep working but so hard to find
  - not a lot of opportunities to grow within jobs - sometimes it feels like you need an "in"
  - students coming out of college - I can't afford to live here
  - High school internship connections- this feels really possible to have during the school day, trade experience→ Build greater relationships within the town, kids identify what they want/enjoy
3. Improvements to appearance citywide.
  - Updating basic infrastructure maintenance. Deteriorated streets, curbs, and sidewalks keep areas from looking truly nice.





- The town looks like a dump due to heavy drinking, recklessness and drugs. The natural beauty of Winona is great, but the houses and business look like crap
- Keep up with infrastructure, roads, internet - that make cities better places to live, drive
- 4. Restaurant and shopping choices. Restaurants and shopping were mentioned frequently as both strengths and opportunities in Winona. Respondents appreciated Winona's local restaurants and wanted even more food and shopping options.
  - Big name stores like Kohls or TJMaxx so we don't have to leave Winona to shop. We need to leave town to shop for dressy clothes, etc.
  - adding more healthy food options for restaurants/quick food options (Panera, chipotle, etc.)
  - Investment in Winona. That's very broad, I know, but the biggest reason positive change comes to Winona is because too many people are content to gripe / resistant to change / take their business elsewhere. As a lifelong resident, I've seen my entire life how people complain that there aren't good restaurants and entertainment venues in town, while at the same time providing very little incentive for people to bring them here. On the whole, Winonans don't put their money where they live.
  - an actual real mall with major national stores and services
- 5. Creative approaches to funding. Several comments were about the cost of improvements to the city's infrastructure and services, with ideas about paying for projects with diverse funding sources.
  - taxes: keep the taxes at a reasonable level so that companies don't move out to a lower tax State/City. Reasonable taxes so that folks can stay in their own home.
  - We have tax capacity and bond rating we could utilize
  - We need folks at the city who have enough of a vision to compete for bonding - we need more infrastructure for the economic development we're looking for, actual community infrastructure, not just the bridge. to get where we need to go, we need city staff to write those grants [and advocate for bonding]
  - Bottom line is Winona's great, but we rely too much on bake sales and fish dinners - the city has to dive in a little bit more and say you know what, this is important. a better job of presenting Winona to the people coming in and driving through. It's well worth it - why not invest in our own town.
  - A sales tax and a major push on street repairs and bike lanes.
- 6. Development equity and reinvestment in underutilized areas. Respondents noted that much of recent development has happened in the East End shopping area and downtown, while shopping options elsewhere have decreased.
  - Rebuild the west end of Winona and have way more kid/family oriented places and things to do and for all seasons!
  - integrate stores closer to where people live
  - Making sure the mall and downtown areas don't have empty storefronts, but rather have unique stores and restaurants to bring in tourism and to have places for area families to shop/play.

## **Historic downtown and riverfront revitalization**





People in Winona love our downtown and riverfront and had lots of ideas for making these areas more vibrant for residents and visitors alike. Respondents also suggested ways to improve the appearance of historic buildings and create pathways for reuse. We received 195 comments about Winona's historic downtown and riverfront in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future.

### **Connections to values**

Historic downtown and riverfront revitalization connects to values of entrepreneurship, small-town feel, natural environment, and access to recreation areas.

### **Issues and ideas**

1. Small business and downtown area development. Many respondents expressed a desire to see more small business activity downtown, and more advocacy to bring customers to businesses. Current efforts, like downtown block parties and Levee Park improvements, were noted as strengths to build on.
  - Downtown needs the most help, and there needs to be a better way to make the community aware of new businesses opening in the area. It can't all be left up to the store owners.
  - I think a grant for the downtown area would go a long way to make this a destination town. I envision all of the fronts of the downtown businesses with facelifts that make them all look like an old river town with so many different shops that Winona becomes a destination town similar to Galena, IL.
  - Clean up downtown. Make storefronts attractive, more flowers, out side seating, inform people. So many are totally unaware of what there is to do, what stores exist etc etc
  - nicer looking buildings as you come down off the bridge into winona
  - -continue (and do more) block party of block off downtown roads for events, restaurant seating, etc
  - Investment in downtown. Streetscaping and improving connections through downtown from the levee and residential neighborhoods. Strategic redevelopment of key properties. Incentives to improve historic structures, etc..
2. Riverfront revitalization.
  - The river front - reclaiming it from the grain elevators eyesore and truck traffic would make our town so much more beautiful
  - 60 Main street project. Getting a hotel in the downtown area
  - building a venue like the La Crosse Center would significantly help Winona in so many ways.
  - Expanding the farmers market and enhancing the levee entrance area to make the market better
  - I am a great believer in conserving our history in our public and private buildings and would like to see even more reuse of many of these fine structures from the past. I would also like to see the riverfront developed more fully as a public entrance point to our city. The Levee project should serve as a beginning.
  - more development i.e. restaurants/entertainment along river (accessible by land and water)
3. Balancing historic standards with building reuse and reinvestment.



- historic preservation is good but seems to stop development - it's too expensive and there's no ROI - (city needs to) continue to incentivize this and give grants for this
- -limitations imposed by downtown overly puts crimp on property owners use of buildings
- There are some entities I didn't know about--history board said I couldn't put a shipping container in the parking lot. I've gotten a cease and desist from the city about something else. I have to wear a lot of hats--for me to try and grow my small business at the same time I'm jumping through hoops, that's kind of difficult. can we have some agility to change some stuff, especially with historical restrictions.
- Signage- way too strict (historic requirements). in old times- it was this beautiful mess
- Repurpose historical buildings in new and different ways
- Making sure that we look at the assets we have in the community, and try to think outside the box and maximize their usefulness. Masonic temple has huge possibilities, happy with the investment so far - we hope that that investment will continue, so it actually can be an asset/bring money in. a building like that is a huge asset to this city
- (historic building) reuse has some flexibility - that's important to understand. There's lots of examples of reuse where you are allowed to change things in ways that are acceptable. Adding onto properties when needed, and so forth. complex but there's flexibility there.

## Equity

Responses about equity revealed residents' hopes for a future Winona where everyone is fully welcome, included, and celebrated. We received 136 comments about equity in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future.

### Connections to values

Equity connects to Winona's shared values of livability, community, and entrepreneurship, and the comprehensive plan overarching theme of equity. Many participants said that being known as a welcoming community will play a big role in Winona's economic competitiveness going forward.

### Issues and ideas

1. Attracting young professionals and workers
  - DEI - not just white guilt - truly make students feel like they belong here, welcomed into the community off campus. everyone gets a shoe that fits. applies to colleges students, new workforce being attracted
  - demographics and population will become critical to winona. birth rate is below replacement level. cities will need to promote immigration to keep growing and keep schools open and have a workforce. it would be wise to make a concerted effort to make it easy for people to come here. immigrants to come to the city. attract, and make it a place where they want to be.
  - -there is a lot of old people. No one young is coming to town.
  - For the city looking for ways to support those business owners to push outside the box a little bit. some businesses have worked specifically to attract and recruit refugees and immigrants, and have had success with that. starting with bringing in interpreters for interviews and trainings, interpreting osha interviews, town halls with interpreters. those



things that aren't dollars on new equipment, it's really changing the culture. you're bringing in more people by being open-minded, and making people feel like you genuinely want them.

2. Reflecting all of Winona's cultures in events and community decision making.
  - steamboat days - grow bigger - should be more inclusive and diverse with something for everyone
  - are there enough after school programs for kids who don't speak english? my kid plays basketball but doesn't speak enough english and he's not allowed to participate - there's not enough here for him to follow his dream - school but nothing out of school
  - program to teach community about hmong language
  - more culturally diverse food options
  - broaden beyond Polish culture in our cultural celebrations/festivals
  - Winona is extremely provincial and still has a lot of exclusionary behaviors going on. A project directly focused on bringing more voices to the table to influence the future of the city would have a big impact.
3. Celebrating Winona's indigenous heritage.
  - -Friendship Covenant with Dakota community—material commitment to this rather than simply the language. The statement is hollow without community resources dedicated.
  - i think winona/keoxa needs to reckon with being on stolen Indigenous land, which feels connected to who is making decisions that continually disrespect that reality.
  - Work with native american partners to provide interpretive signage that explains the significance of Sugarloaf and Winona (Keoxa) from their perspective
4. Welcoming all ages, abilities, races, socioeconomic levels, etc.
  - discrimination - we need some more peace and acceptance here in Winona. for colored and LGBTQ+ people
  - need more respect for sr citizens + veterans - bring into the community - larger sr apt/rooms at facilities - more adapted daily living practices for senior care
  - Find a way to be more welcoming to the bipoc community. Winona needs to understand it has been a community of privilege for a century and a half. Privilege is tough to accept for some Winonan's- we had a path to the middle class that others didn't have
  - need to be inclusive to make people want to come here.
  - I think welcoming people - though I think we claim to be I don't always see it. I think enough is done to give that image but not always sure it's true. Now this is coming from me, a run of the mill middle aged white mom. Not trying to Insert race into this but I can see how our city tries to put off that image of being accepting but I'm not sure we are. I can see poor people or people that don't speak English or maybe have trouble with the law or made some mistakes still looked down on. I think the amount of money we all earn still is huge and a barrier to people.
  - we have a lot of amenities, but a lot of them don't cater to youth on an ongoing basis - need to have something that offers fun and help/hope - develop family values more
5. Addressing environmental and systemic inequality
  - every project is an opportunity to green neighborhoods. neighborhoods without tree canopy are also the neighborhoods that don't have ac



- equity and empathy - creating a community where all can thrive - where we know how to care for ourselves and each other
- I want white people to realize we live in a segregated city and care about changing that. And to want people of color to live next door to them. Tons of latinx people in rural winona county - I want us to see each other. I want everyone to feel like a welcome part of our community.

## **Park and recreation**

People in Winona love to use the parks and outdoor areas to play, exercise, relax, and connect with each other. We received 133 comments about parks and recreation in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future.

### **Connection to values**

Parks and recreation connect to Winona's values of natural beauty, access to recreation, and livability.

### **Issues and ideas**

Respondents suggested improvements such as park and trail maintenance, accessible and updated amenities, and diverse venues that accommodate all ages and seasons.

1. Park and trail maintenance
  - a. I love the parks, and I sometimes wonder what the bigger plan is for some of those things. trail maintenance and improvements.
  - b. Implementing a stronger trail system meant for outdoor recreation with an emphasis on mountain biking. This would no doubt draw in many more people from other areas and greatly increase use by local residents. I honestly believe this could really help out the city. Just look at other towns and cities that made strong efforts to bring in outdoor enthusiasts. These places have seen strong economic growth and an increased sense of community.
2. Accessible and updated amenities
  - a. Access to trail maps in town would be very helpful for tourists, new community members, and people from nearby communities. At sole sport, we were constantly asked for this by customers
  - b. Accessibilty. We are not very friendly to travelers or guests - no public toilets, very few water fountains. We could even use more covered areas for sitting.
3. Outdoor recreation venues for all ages and seasons.
  - a. Making an investment in Winona lake park both east and west. That is the heart of Winona. There isn't a single place for people (particularly who are older, grandparents) to get together (inter generational and interracial... diversity) and socialize, drink coffee east something together by the lakes. Winters are too long, not everyone snowshoes or hikes. People like watching other people and nature. Parks in minneapolis have those opportunities.
  - b. Winona needs more recreation like open ice skating and rock climbing and field complexes people don't have the opportunity to enjoy time outdoors because fields are



- owned by cotter and the ice arena has open ice for one hour once a week the people of Winona should have more opportunities to enjoy public facilities
- c. playground at the mall is so missed - I think that age (preschool - needs more attention)

## Community identity

A theme that emerged in the response data involved people's perception of Winona as a community, both for people living here and for potential visitors and newcomers. What kind of a community are we, and what do we have to offer? Where are we headed, and how do we address barriers to getting there? These questions are at the forefront of the Comprehensive Plan Update as we seek to define what Winona values and create a community vision statement. The themes below represent 119 comments in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future.

### Connections to values

It was interesting to see this topic emerge in tandem with the most mentioned value for respondents: the sense of community in Winona. Participants told us that this sense of community is not equally felt, and pointed to a need to define community values and vision in order to build a thriving, resilient community.

### Ideas and issues

1. Attracting tourists, retaining residents. Comments suggested ways to appeal to a wide variety of new residents and retain young professionals and college graduates
  - student engagement in the business community - retention of young professionals
  - What does a healthy community look like - buildings are taken care of, infrastructure, bike lanes, wraparound resources, good jobs, residents are active and healthy, especially historic buildings need to be taken care of
  - What gets 30-40 year olds to come, stay, and raise our families - we are the tax base to support all of this, we're the caretakers, so how do we attract and retain folks in this group? Job needs to be meaningful, well compensated. Need stronger public schools, affordable homes
  - Variety of interests of people coming in - do we have resources to support people coming in. We don't have a mall or the chain restaurants that people look for. Difficult to attract folks from somewhere else. Not sure why that has been a challenge to maintain. Perception that it's not in Winona, why would I stay.
  - Winona people need to realize how great the town is and change their attitude from "winona sucks" to "holy crap look at all of this great stuff!" Winona needs a "visit winona" for its own locals.
  - I think people need to realize -- we keep congratulating ourselves on winona being a beautiful town. it was. now it's a poorly maintained industrial town in a beautiful setting, and until we say that hey let's fix this and stop being so proud, then we won't get anywhere.
2. Identifying our vision, and maximizing the Comprehensive Plan Update process by leveraging the full community.
  - who does Winona want to be? we seem to be grasping, not really sure where we want to go



- If possible, the plan should contain a common goal, in no more than 30 words, for all the people of Winona. Then we should all work toward that common goal and come back to it in any dispute over the development of Winona.
- broaden the plan out so that others see their place in the plan. we all have an impact in this community and we want it to be really good, a strong thriving community. and there are some big issues out there
- 3. Working with opposition to change
  - -cool ideas are opposed, and good plans have stopped due to outspoken individuals—eg stuck with parking lot at old Y location, no lake park baseball, no Kwik Trip at Huff and Sarnia
  - -figure out polarization issue - paralysis – less divisive
  - Winona tends to get in its own way - invests a lot of money in decision making process, but then people do not like the choices, leadership changes, but then nothing gets done and no change happens.
  - The amount of red tape and negative nancies here - folks who poo poo any idea ever - Winona is known as a place that's hard to develop in. I talk to people in construction who say that. there are so many missed opportunities and people are a bit too scared of change around here.
- 4. Creating change that enhances Winona's values and assets, without detracting.
  - we have to be very careful answering that question - how do you change it without changing it - the hometowny thing
  - see this as a larger thing - we all have a vested interest in this community and its sustainability and where it's going. out-migration in the most recent census, why are people leaving, it's a substantial loss. could end up a vicious spiral with aging population and no new people coming in. we need to be intentional about planning for the future
  - A little bit of the old guard too - complicated to think how you can honor that and then keep things moving forward.
  - people who come from other communities that find themselves welcome, and people who are from here still recognize this as their place
  - Winona needs a moral boost. So many people are discouraged, and look to the past and compare it to now. Towns of smaller sizes are thriving in ways that we can't compare. Why is that? I'm going to sound like a broken record, but downtown revitalization is important.
- 5. Making opportunities for connection across divides
  - BLOCK PARTIES! (I had to.... I'm pretty enthusiastic about them and genuinely believe they help in making a neighborhood feel like a community)
  - Intentional community building. If community members have greater empathy and opportunities to feel seen and heard, we can begin the process of building a shared agenda.

## Environment and sustainability

The main themes about the environment from respondents were related to the importance of natural areas management, finding alternative sustainable solutions, incorporating green space into new development,



and finding ways to minimize pollution. We received a total of 105 comments about the environment in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future in Phase 1.

### **Connections to values**

The environment matters to Winona's shared values of livability, natural setting, and access to outdoor recreation, and comprehensive plan themes of equity, technology, and sustainability.

### **Issues and ideas**

1. Natural areas management, especially with heavily used areas.
  - a. The lakes have frozen like glass - skate the whole lake - but motorbikes use it as well. Drinking, loud, and around young kids. I'd like to see the lakes regulated for public use and safety.
  - b. More funding for Healthy Lake Winona's work is critical. Maintaining the health of our lakes and providing appropriate habitat for the native flora and fauna is fundamental to the health of our town. The accessibility to nature on the lakes is important and should be included in funding considerations.
  - c. We also want to focus on stewardship and conservation -- it's an important piece of rec -- what is the impact this is going to create on the environment, and how do we mitigate the negative impacts of that. keep it healthy and successful for future generations. grow the sustainability of parks and trails, and grow that department.
2. Cooperative maintenance was mentioned both as a way to keep public spaces nice and provide opportunities for community members to meet each other
  - a. -enhance Latsch Island as part of the community--it's not even kept up sometimes
  - b. Picking up trash around the lake with the football team is something treatment court has done before - with a large group of people involved in this service opportunity was great - meeting others we wouldn't normally associate with
  - c. A way to keep Winona clean and not full of trash to keep everything looking nice
  - d. the alternative to paying for park maintenance is us taking care of our parks, being stewards. community garden - people are comfortable there, it's part of their identity, there's a shared ownership. opportunity to be in the same space doing things together.. community gardens, neighborhood stewardship areas, culture of that. more trees, cleaner storm drains could come out of that.
3. Incorporating green space, and Winona's unique topography, into development plans.
  - a. We're building a lot and forgetting to add green areas - that's why Winona is popular because of how green it is, and we are killing it
  - b. Winona should be the most accessible outdoor rec destination in N America
  - c. Push for broadly - nature-based solutions, environmental engineering, green stormwater infrastructure should be considered in every single development plan.
  - d. East End Rec has a LOT of impervious surfaces - why doesn't it have rain gardens and/or a green roof?
  - e. -more green (grassy) spaces > so much concrete around levee Park (parking and platforms)
  - f. Saving the river and bluffs- watershed- we have so many natural resources- we offer too many variances w/bluff land construction





4. Modern, sustainable solutions. Respondents mentioned a desire to see more modern energy sources and lighting. Some responses also pointed to a need for better relationships between large industries and surrounding neighborhoods.
  - a. use renewable energy all around
  - b. -more solar panels
  - c. solar covered parking lots
  - d. add new environmentally friendly lighting
  - e. WSU is a decent neighbor, we continue to have issues with students occasionally, student housing - just to emphasize that I don't think it's a huge problem. stadium noise levels are tough, and the lights left on late at night, overnight, or early in the morning. it seems that sometimes lights are on and no ones even in the stadium.
  - f. better communication between manufacturing and neighboring houses

Engage Winona also led city-wide engagement for the city's Sustainability Plan in 2021. We've included high-level results from that engagement here, and a full copy of the engagement report is available as well.

#### 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

## Arts and culture

Responses about arts and culture recognized the liveliness and sense of community that events and concerts bring, mentioning events like Live at the Levee and drive-in movies and concerts at the bandshell. Respondents expressed a desire for more community events and festivals, youth involvement, and venue expansion. We received a total of 80 comments about arts and culture in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future.

### Connections to values

The ideas that residents shared regarding arts and culture connect to expressed values of community, livability, activities for all ages, and small-town feel.

### Ideas and issues

1. Events and activities that appeal to all ages and include a variety of cultures.
  - more concerts - live at the levee, shakespeare, more community events
  - public services being more visible to college students, town festivals more applicable
  - festivals feel geared toward older generations - add kid-friendly and kid-specific things, activating space
  - Touched on this in #2. We need a bigger draw for younger family's. Almost no night life outside of going to a bar, lack of entertainment sources.
2. Downtown activation.
  - Creating more of an entertainment attraction filled downtown. Shops and a lot of places to eat but not a lot of places to just spend time and engage without doing one or the other
  - festivals, activities, focus on getting folks downtown for something besides bars. those things bring folks in, and give people new things to do, making it feel like we're all part of this community, everybody mingling. hopefully that becomes even stronger.



sometimes it is strange when we're not connecting in meaningful ways, and we'd be a stronger community if we're able to play into that a bit more.

- Levee, downtown friday nights, get people to go out and mingle and kind of create community. We're the most healthy looking that we have been in many years.
3. Performance venues.
- Indoor performance/art venue too - that takes some passionate people at the top, would have ripple effects in the whole community. People looking for other things to do would spend money
  - Missoula schedule- if you can get it rolling, people can count on it, there is more demand there than you know. If you have it- people will show up
  - Don't like the bars- but want good music
  - there is a park in the Cities called an Art Park. There is plenty of space for that in Winona - it would be free for people to attend and casually look at it
  - We have to sell them on winona, and I just think winona is blessed with three institutions of higher ed and blessed by all the cultural opportunities here. I love the city's investment in the arts, and the more we can do to support arts development is great. if we had more performance venues that would be great.
4. Year-round and indoor entertainment.
- I would like there to be more to do in the winter
  - more child-centered safe activities throughout year
  - a big snow party
  - we have winter here five months out of the year - ice skating
5. Public-private partnerships
- figuring out how arts orgs (and others) - finding ways to collaborate. an opportunity to take what already exists and work together to make it better and something new
  - the arts: leave open for private to fill the need
  - wish for more entertainment things to do - museums, restaurants, yoga places
  - Institutional (and business) dedication to making Winona an arts-education destination.
  - Fiscal responsibility is the engine that drives this - any projects that develop from it - the biggest piece of that funding comes from our business community. they're the largest tax base. They already support the arts that they support, and they don't want an additional tax increase. It's really important for them to be involved. They threaten to remove funding from the arts if they pay more in taxes. I want them to be engaged because if there's things they don't like or want to champion, they need to voice that.

## Land Use

Comments about land use covered topics such as a more detailed and considerate expansion plan, sustainability prioritization, and riverfront utilization. Respondents also commented about use of land for parking areas, especially in Winona's downtown core. We received a total of 63 comments about land use in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future.

## Connections to values



The topic of land use is closely aligned with values reported by community members. Many people view Winona's small geographic size as an asset, and at the same time, the limited amount of land needs to be considered in planning and land use decision making.

### Issues and ideas

1. Consideration of Winona's size and geographic constraints.
  - property development is good - but it should be planned
  - Be mindful of land use in town - we're so short on land
  - we need to have a plan for expansion beyond current borders -an orderly plan. We need to grow somewhere
2. Consideration of natural areas.
  - As we develop, it's important to consider the natural resources, celebrate that, develop ecotourism around that. Balance it with a sense of sustainability and enriching that space, planning for the future intentionally.
  - Bring more attention to the river - in many ways we've turned our back to it - we rely on it to sustain us. There's a vibrancy the river can give to us. You can see how communities benefit from pivoting to the river
3. Use of land for parking areas. Parking in downtown was an area of note for respondents. Some feel more parking is needed, while others are concerned about the use of developable land for surface parking lots.
  - My vision was a parking ramp, I still think we need that option downtown- take a look at Rochester or la crosse
  - more parking - it's hard downtown
  - Parking - it's hard around the friendship center
  - use of space - there are to many parking lots that others do not use.
  - it feels like big business and the universities run the town - if they want to see something good happen, that's lucky for us. If they want to see a parking ramp, that's unlucky, because we think there should have been housing there. those conversations seem really weighted-skewed toward the rich people.
  - -more green (grassy) spaces > so much concrete around levee Park (parking and platforms)"

### Other comments

A subset of comments were about respondents' hopes for use of the new comprehensive plan, funding streams for new projects, and collaborations and partnerships.

- -increase in partnerships between universities and city gov and orgs and biz > professional experiences > capstones and internships
- -always great to see Winona increase - new investment - but it increases tax valuation > explore different types of taxes
- And always be ready for change. Plans can be limiting when new ideas come forward and the plan is used as a defense of the status quo. Like our US Constitution, the comprehensive plan could include within it provisions for possible changes.



- codify things in the strategic plan - we're not held responsible for doing those things so they just get pushed aside.

We also received a number of comments that touched on multiple themes. Folks told us they couldn't pick one, which is understandable!

- Keeping the old building, finding things for kids to do like roller skating, getting some shops on the west end of town stop the roundabouts on Mankato as how are people suppose to cross if walking or biking even the highway one
- There's actually two projects or issues I would have dress and would make the biggest difference in Winona off one being the housing issue for people that have criminal backgrounds so that they have a place to live and to the transportation issue with the bus system currently and changing that to back to the way it used to be and the buses running every 15 minutes on the hour instead of every 45 minutes on the hour
- If I were homeless or struggling financially... I would say affordable housing and childcare. Having access to those things would change the trajectory of people's lives (I know it's more complicated than that). I also think shifting our transportation systems from being car-centric to walker/biker/public transit centric... Winona would be safer, more connection and more environmentally friendly. combined with lack of accessibility would also make a big difference in Winona
- conservation efforts for our unique ecosystem & helping our small businesses thrive (sorry, couldn't pick one)

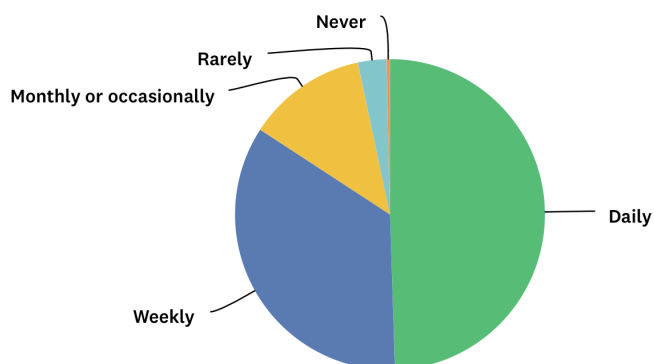
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## Part 3: Places and behaviors

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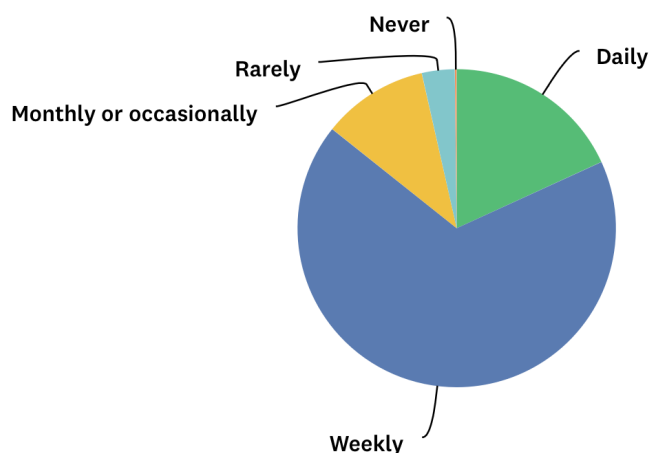
### Free time

In our survey, we asked folks to tell us how often they spent free time in Winona outside their home. For example, shopping, exercising, going to parks - anything you might do for fun. We asked these questions to help us get a snapshot of how people interact with their surroundings. We received 570 responses to this question. 84% of respondents said they spent free time in Winona daily or weekly.



## Shopping

In our survey, we asked folks to tell us how often they shopped in Winona. We received 567 responses to this question. 86% of respondents said they shopped in Winona daily or weekly.

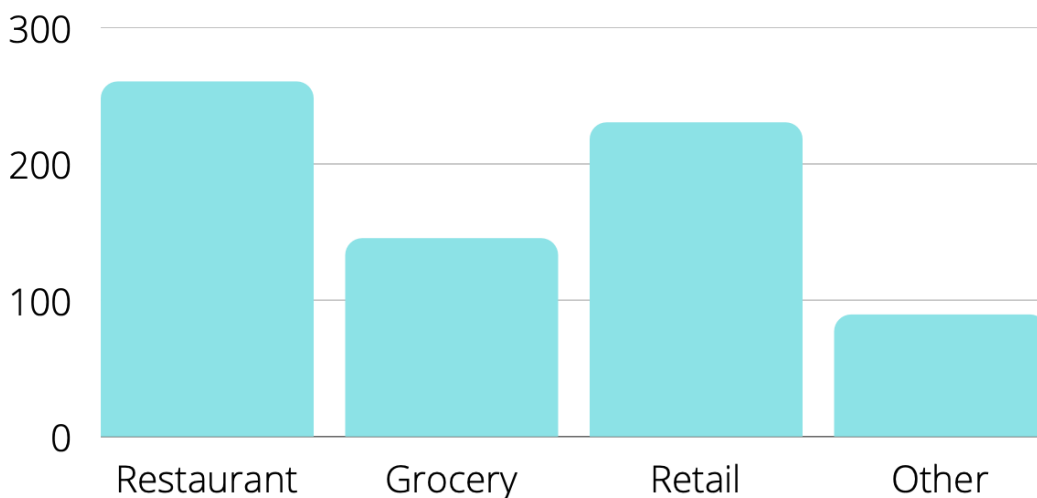


A handful of respondents chose to leave additional comments for each of the two questions above. Several noted that the pandemic affected their ability to shop in Winona, and some said mentioned barriers including weather, cost of living, and being homebound. Some mentioned frequently leaving Winona to shop, especially for clothes and for more racially integrated places.

## Small, locally owned businesses

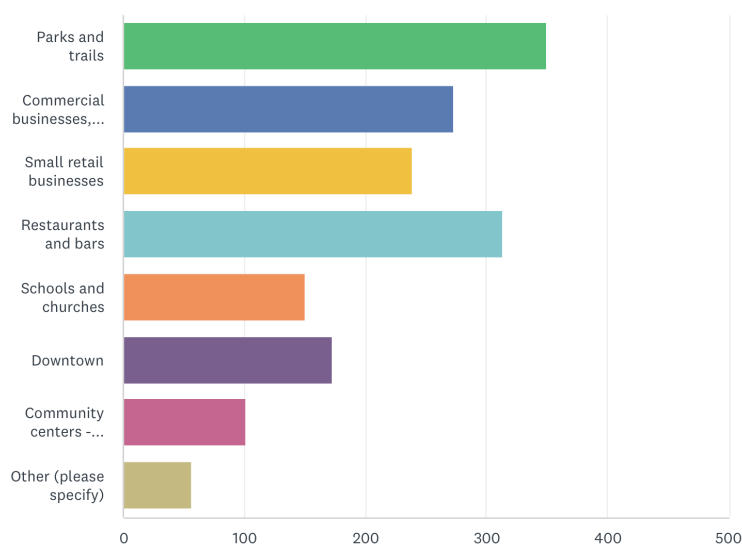
We asked survey participants to tell us if they frequently visited one or more small, locally-owned businesses. 570 people answered this question, and 79% said yes.

Of those who visit local businesses, 90% mentioned a business in downtown Winona. Restaurants, cafes, and bars were most common, followed by retail, grocery, and other.



**What Winona places (besides home and work) do you spend the most time at?**

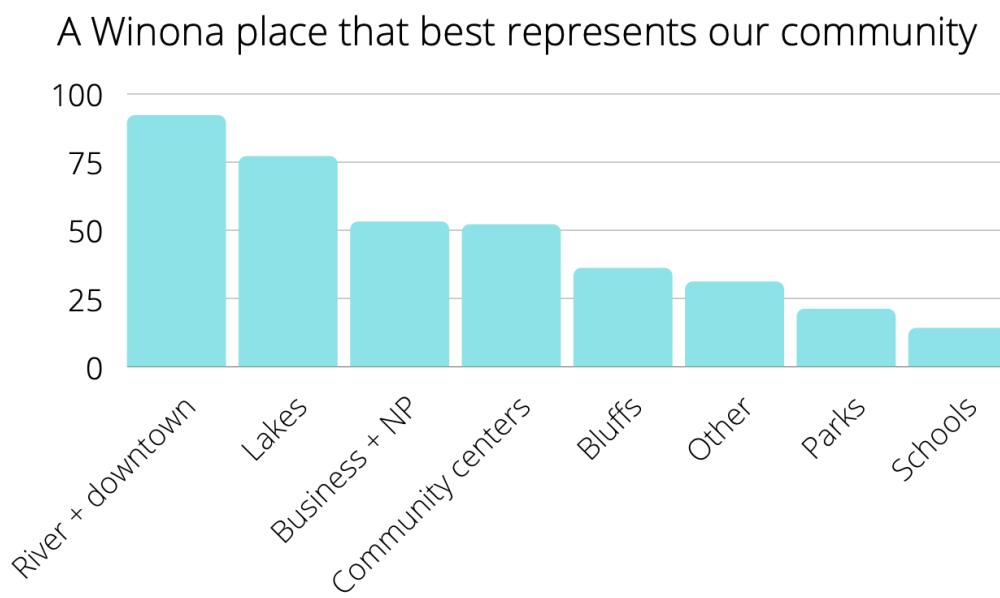
We received 570 responses to this question. Folks could check all that apply.



20 responses mentioned specific parks including Latsch Island, Westfield, soccer and ball fields, the dog park, local state parks, ice climbing, playgrounds, disc golf, the Levee Park splash pad, Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, the Aquatic Center, and Prairie Island. Other places folks mentioned in the comments: Woodlawn Cemetery, healthcare facilities, church meals, commercial businesses, museums, gyms, and the farmers market.

**What Winona place best represents our community?**

We received 376 responses to this question in the survey.

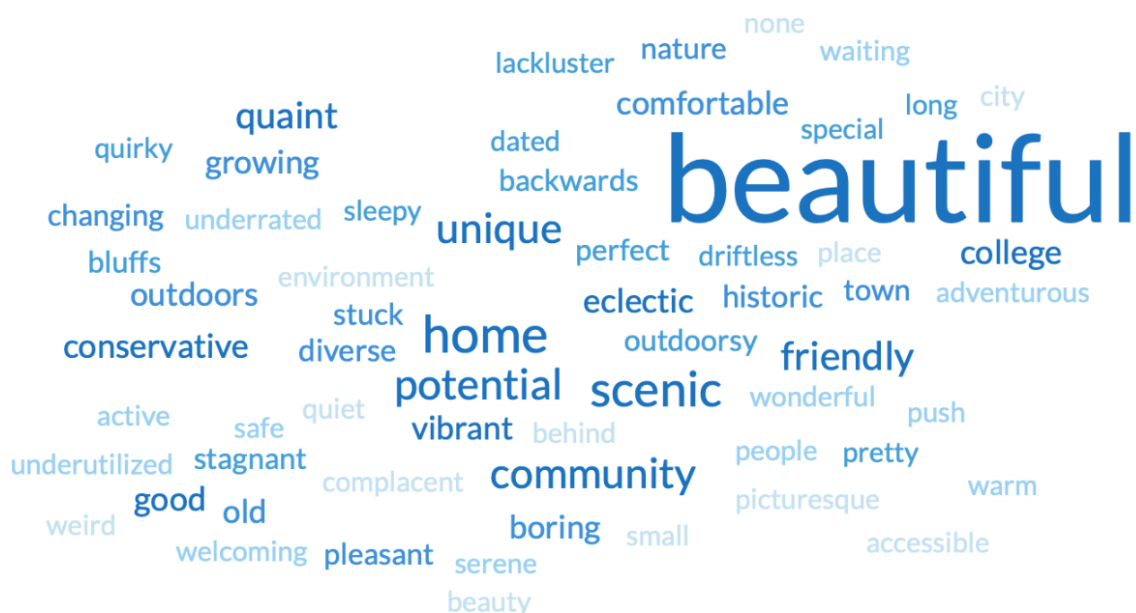


Responses to this question were deep, thoughtful, and went in all sorts of directions. Here are a few, with encouragement to spend some time with the full list!

- Hmm. This is a hard question, but I suppose the levee. It's a little rough around the edges and could use more to do, but it's kind of like Winona overall in that way: it has potential, but it never quite gets developed to its full potential.
- Sugar Loaf seems an obvious answer, as we can see it from all over the community, and it is so beautiful. Sugar Loaf, to me, marks the beauty of our bluffs, our complicated past with Indigenous peoples, the Covenant of Friendship, and a well-known landmark. The library also represents our community well in welcoming all people, addressing needs of the community, including people experiencing homelessness, being an accessible place of learning, growth, and relationships.
- I think the Winona lakes with the park areas represent community. During nice weather you can find so many people utilizing the spaces.
- Parks and trails (and other outdoor activities) are prevalent! This has become a staple for the community.
- Difficult to think of a place. It depends what's happening at the place. I remember being at the Christmas train or steamboat days parade or movies at the bandshell and thinking, wow, all kinds are coming together. It's more the event than the place that gives that cozy, all the kids are home for the holidays type feeling.
- Library... most equitable, draws from every demographic in town, one-stop place for resources and information
- Fleet farm. It's a one stop d.i.y. shop for farmers, landlords, and misfits.
- WSU. The university in the center of town really affects the feel of the town.

#### What one word would you use to describe Winona?

We received 420 responses to this question. Far and away, the most common word was, drumroll please, **beautiful**. The graphic below shows the top 62 words, all of which were mentioned 2 or more times.

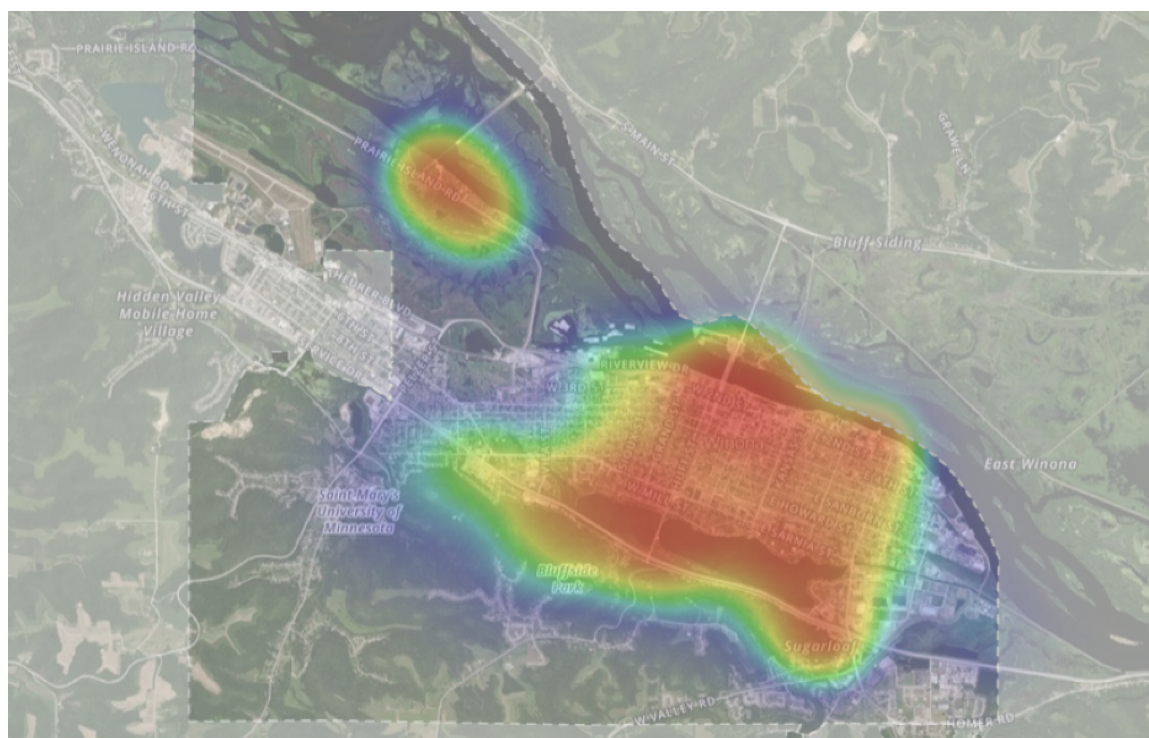


● 70	beautiful	● 6	conservative	● 3	town
● 19	home	● 6	good	● 3	stuck
● 17	scenic	● 5	vibrant	● 3	changing
● 13	potential	● 5	old	● 3	pleasant
● 12	community	● 5	outdoors	● 3	nature
● 12	unique	● 5	boring	● 3	outdoorsy
● 10	friendly	● 5	comfortable	● 3	perfect
● 8	quaint	● 5	growing	● 3	bluffs
● 6	college	● 4	historic	● 3	backwards
● 6	eclectic	● 4	diverse	● 3	stagnant

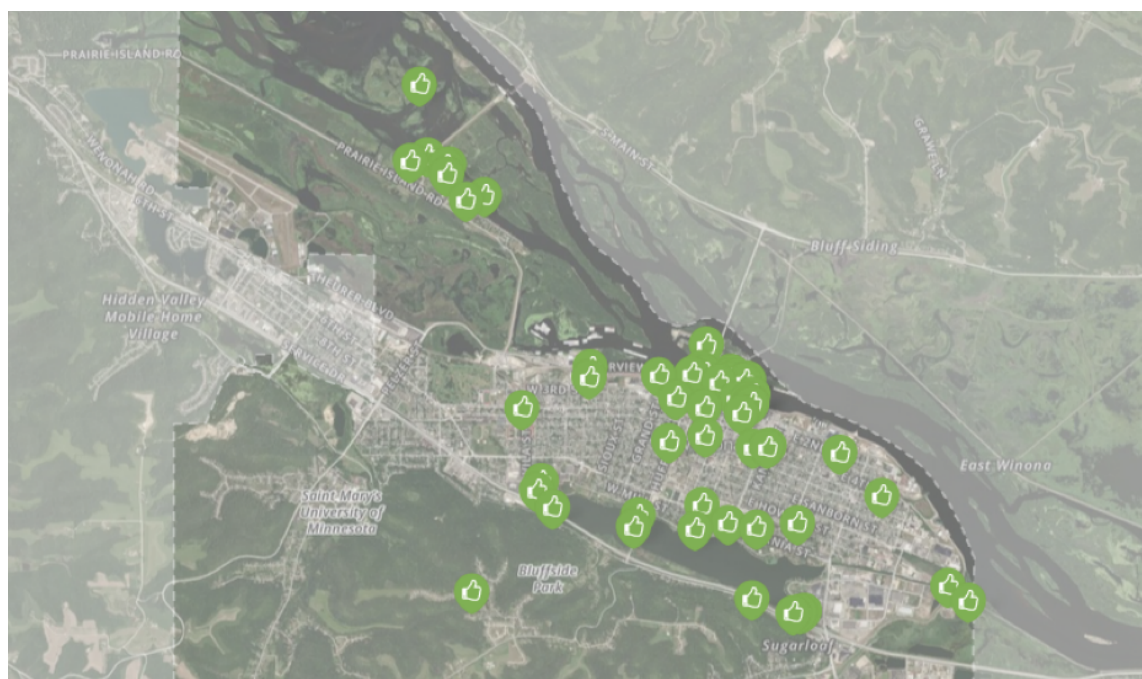
The online mapping tool we used had over 280 comments and over 550 unique viewers. Here are a few snapshots of where map comments were most concentrated.

Comprehensive Plan Engagement Phase 1 Report **56**



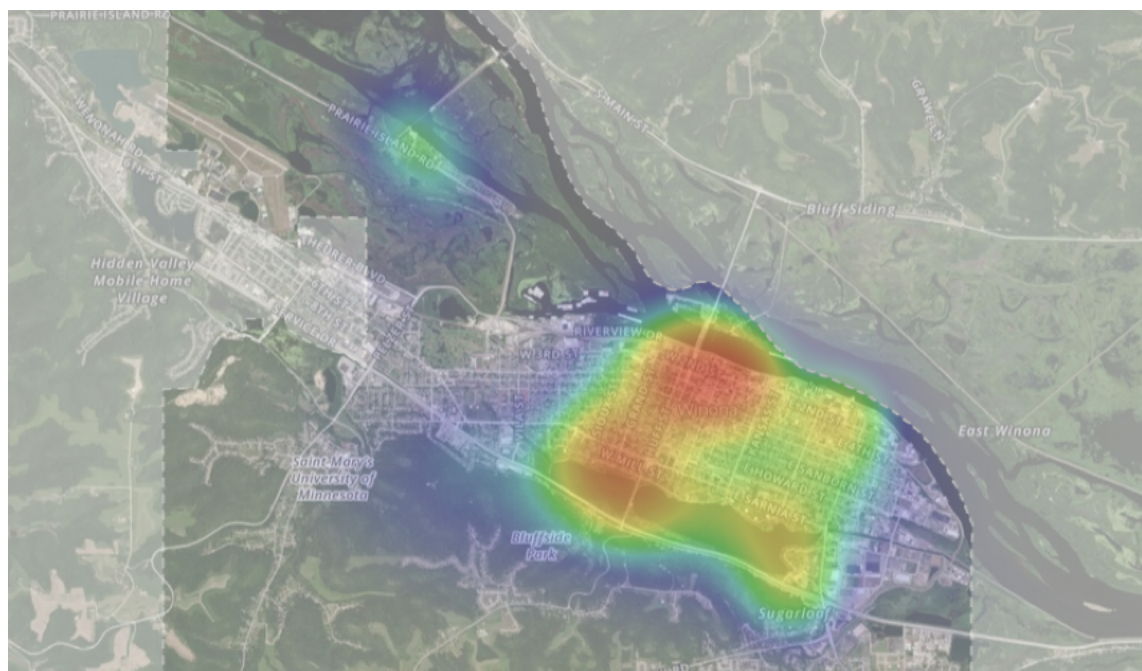


I like it! (57 comments)

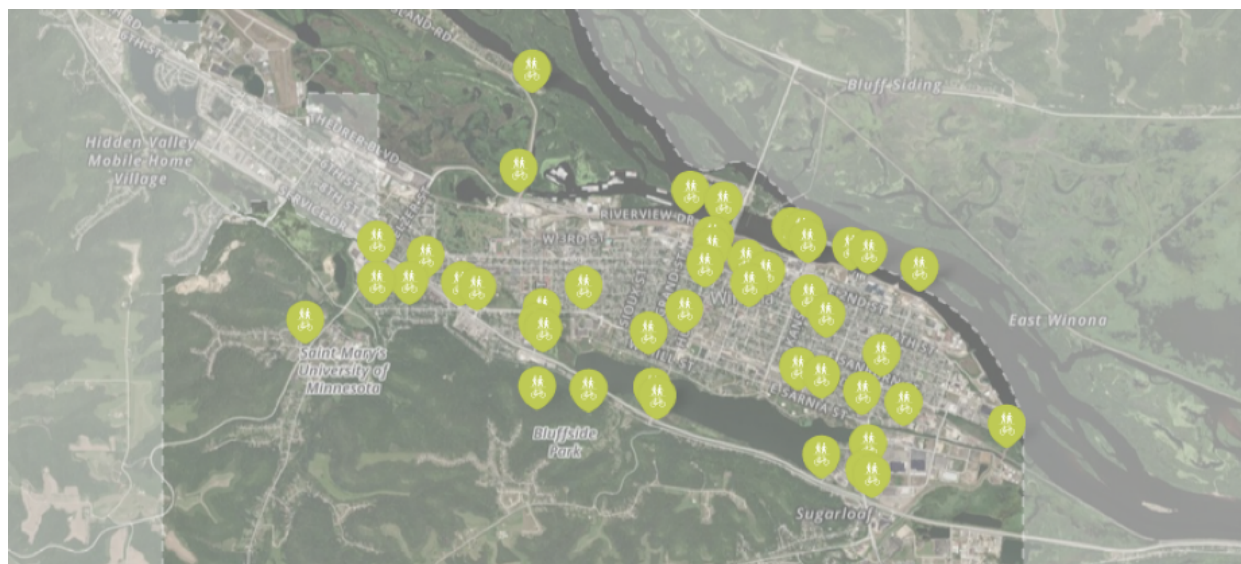




### Needs work! (139 comments)



### Barrier to biking and walking (50 comments)



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## Part 4: Participation



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# Accessible government

At our public events and conversations, we asked folks to tell us how they'd like to be involved in the comprehensive plan update process and other city processes. Asking these questions helped Engage Winona meet the needs of a diverse range of groups and gave us insight into the accessible government comprehensive plan topic.

## Key themes

### **Opportunities to be involved, contribute (50 comments)**

Respondents had lots of ideas for how they'd like to be involved. Comments covered topics like ensuring all groups are heard, public comment at city council meetings, better representation on city boards and commissions, additional opportunities to give input on the comprehensive plan update, and inclusion of moderate voices.

### **Information sharing and use of web tools (9 comments)**

Comments about information included a desire to see the results of the engagement sessions. Participants also wanted to see more social media engagement at the city level, and a better city web presence.

### **Community gatherings (22 comments)**

Participants wanted more opportunities to connect with city staff and elected officials in informal settings. Participants also said they were interested in getting involved in subcommittees as part of comprehensive plan development.

### **Accountability and transparency in governance (16 comments)**

Respondents wanted to see their comments heard and acted upon, and wanted visible implementation of the comprehensive plan. Some said they wanted to see more flexibility on the city's part with reference to new business development.

### **Other (8 comments)**

Other comments referenced environmental concerns, term limits for appointed and elected officials, and connecting across political divides.

## Participant demographics

The engagement process sought to capture the voices of broad, diverse cross-sections of Winona, with particular focus on business and community stakeholders 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.





***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**

- Over **84%** live in Winona; others live nearby (Goodview, neighboring rural areas) and/or work in Winona
- **Over 100** self-identify as a business owner, including Farmers Market vendors
- About 88% identify as white, 5-6% Black, 2% Indigenous, 2% Hispanic or Latino, 2% Asian
- **50%+ of respondents are employed in Winona** - high number of residents with local jobs
- **Ages ranged from high school students to older adults, with more representation of voices under 45:** about 10% ages 13-24; 25% ages 25-34; 25% ages 35-44; 20% ages 45-54; 20% ages 55 and up.
- **Great balance of time lived in Winona:** 40% 10 years or fewer, and 60% 10+ years. 20% have lived in Winona for 0-5 years.
- **Household income slightly higher than city demographics:** 25% reporting below \$50,000; 50% between \$50,000-\$99,000; 25% higher than \$100,000. According to census data at mncompass.org, the City of Winona's household income breakdown is 51% below \$50,000; 31% from \$50,000-\$99,999; and 18% \$100,000 or more.
- **Education levels were higher than city demographics,** with 55% having a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 34% in census data. About 35% had a high school diploma, some college, or an associate's degree.
- **Gender slightly trended toward female,** representing about 55% of participants - this has been consistent across all of our engagement projects
- **Families represented:** About 55% of participants have children 18 or younger in the home
- **Good representation of people who rent and people who own their home:** 30% renting and 70% owning, compared to 40% and 60% in census data.