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MEMORANDUM

TO: Tim Acklin, City of La Crosse; Lewis Kuhlman, City of La Crosse

FROM: GRAEF

DATE: January 19, 2023

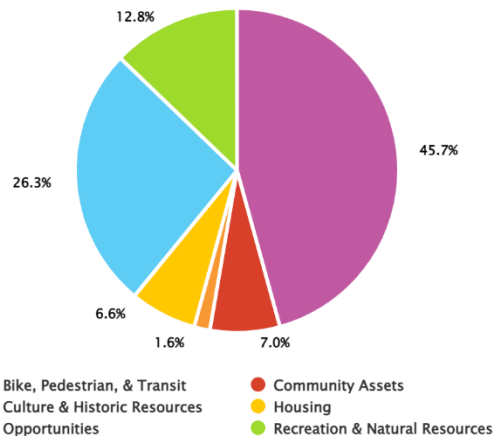
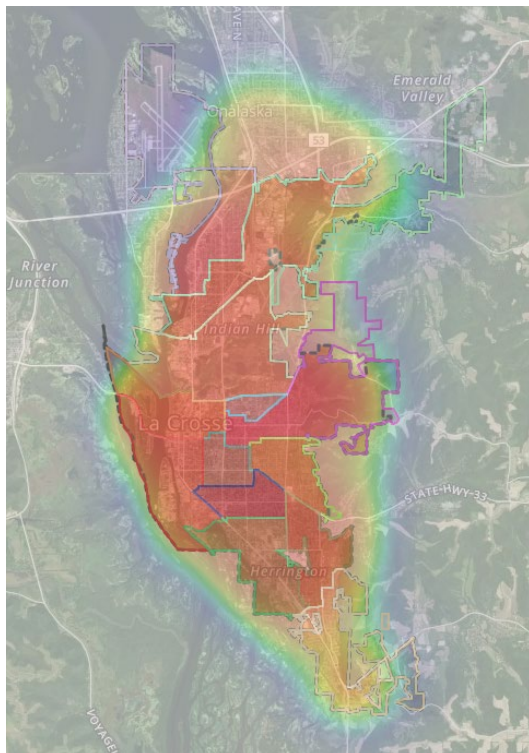
SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan: Community Engagement Summary (data as of December 31, 2022)

Introduction

This memo was prepared to provide the survey results following the promotion of the Comprehensive Plan engagement process through online engagement. The overarching Community Survey collected opinions from more than 2,100 members of the La Crosse community. In addition to the Community Survey, topic-specific surveys and a comment map were also made available, the results of which are also included within this memo. These surveys are one avenue the City is taking to gather feedback about the community's priorities and vision for the future. The results in this memo reflect the initial phase of feedback from the La Crosse community. Additional opportunities for feedback and refinement will be made available as the Comprehensive Plan process continues to take shape.

Comment Map

This heatmap shows areas in the City that received the most comments. Comment types were split relatively evenly across the six comment types with the exception of "Bike, Pedestrian, & Transit" (45.7%) and "Opportunities" (26.3%). The comment map received over 800 comments from community members in six categories.





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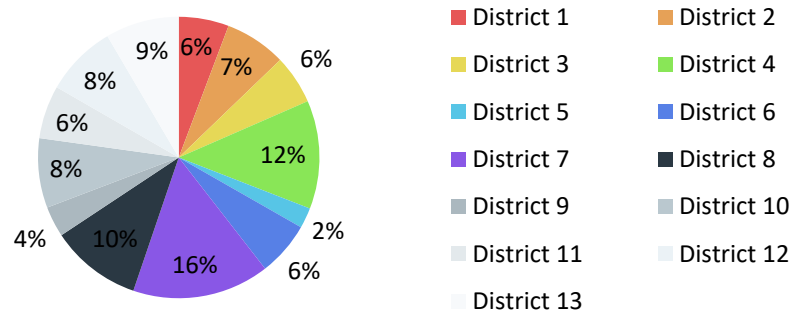
Community Survey

The Community Survey was made available from April-December 2022. The results and major themes are discussed below along with a description of the demographics of survey respondents. The results served to inform the vision and priorities of the Comprehensive Plan.

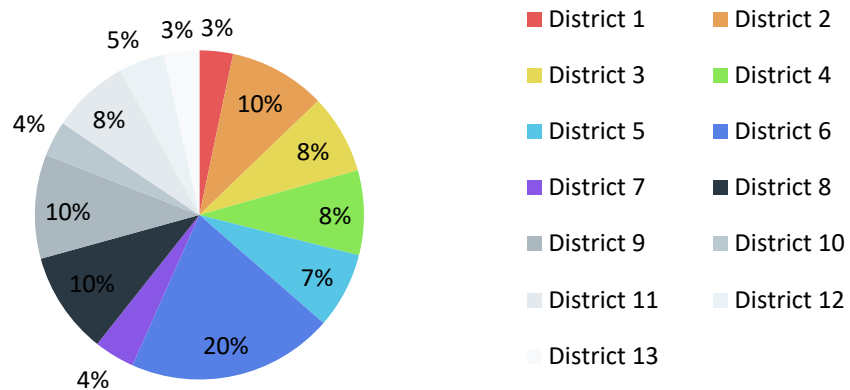
Who answered the survey?

- Survey respondents lived and worked across City Council Districts and neighborhoods, with Grandview Emerson and Weigent-Hogan as the most well-represented neighborhoods
- Over half of survey respondents were female, over one-third were in the 45-64 age category, and three-quarters identified living in a household with 2-3 adults and 2-3 children
- The majority of respondents identified as renters of property with a household income ranging from \$50,000-\$150,000+ and have lived in the City for at least ten years
- The majority of survey respondents reported high levels of educational achievement, with over two-thirds possessing a Bachelors degree or a Graduate/professional degree

If you're a resident, in which Council District do you live?



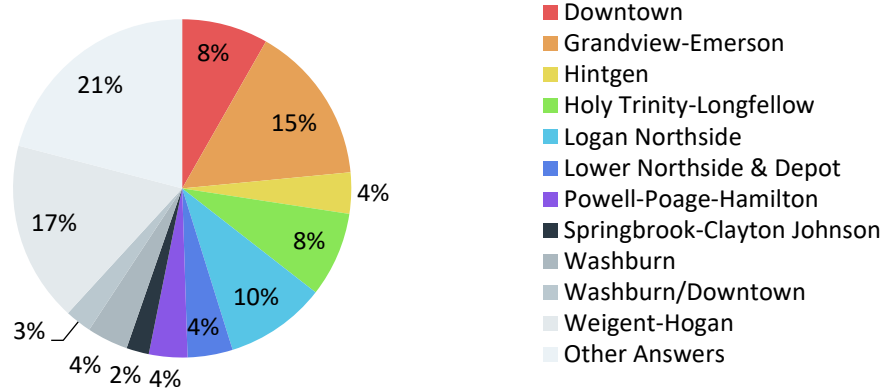
If you work in La Crosse, in which Council District is your office?



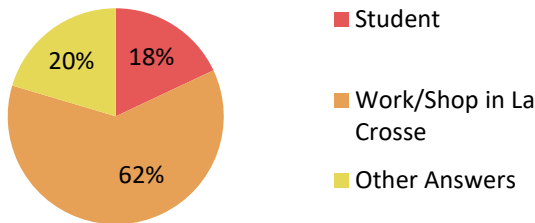


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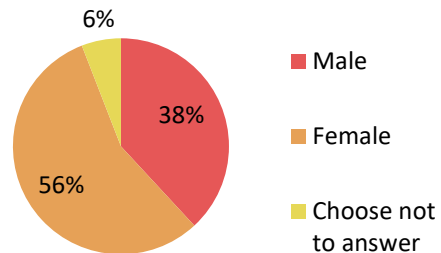
If you're a resident, what neighborhood do you live in?



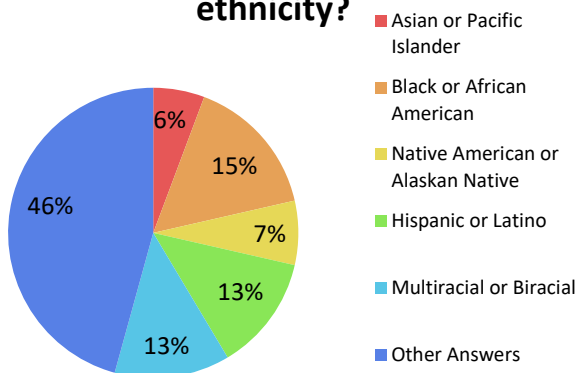
What is your relationship to the City?



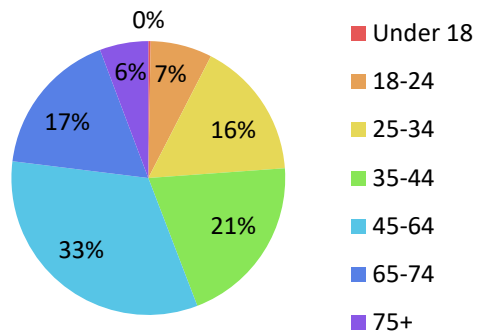
Which gender do you identify with?



What option best describes your ethnicity?



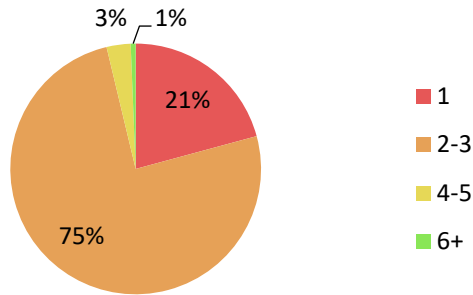
What is your age?



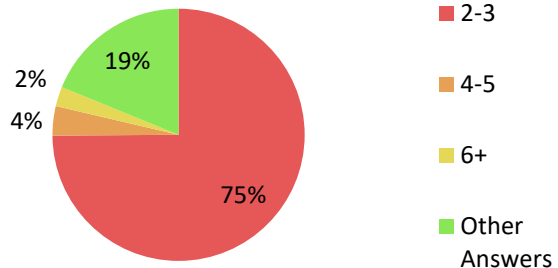


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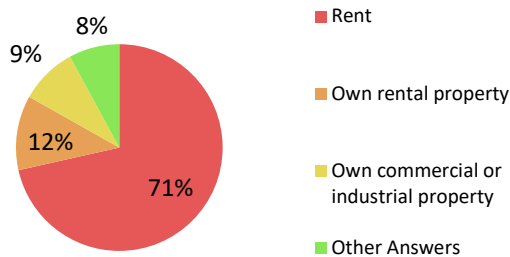
How many adults are in your household?



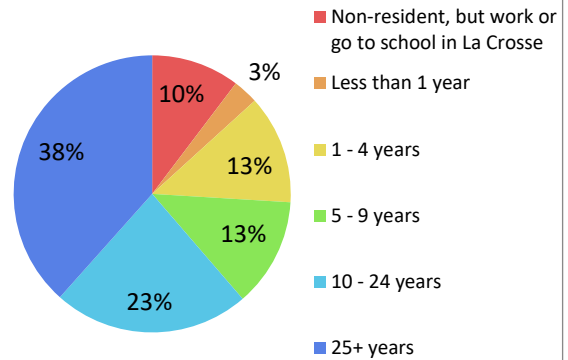
How many children (under 18) are in your household?



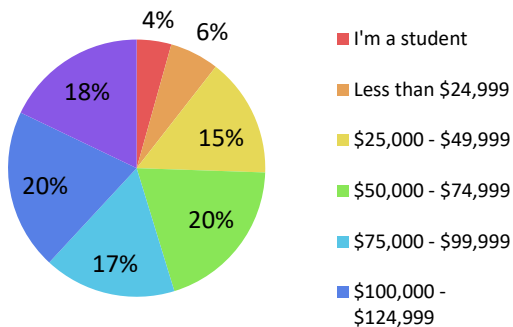
If you live and/or own property in La Crosse, how would you describe your place of residence or type of property ownership? (Select all that apply)



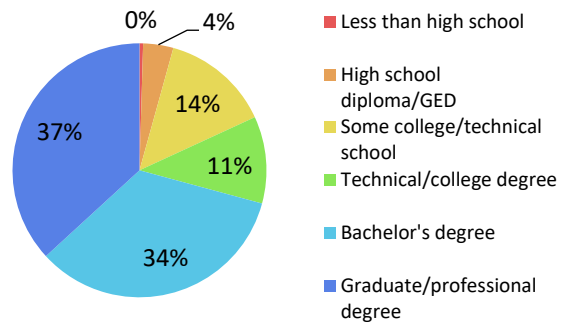
How long have you lived in La Crosse?



Please describe your household income range.



What is the highest level of education you received?



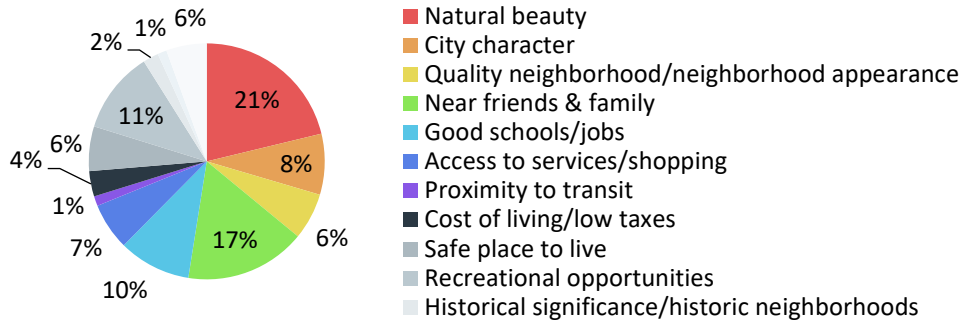


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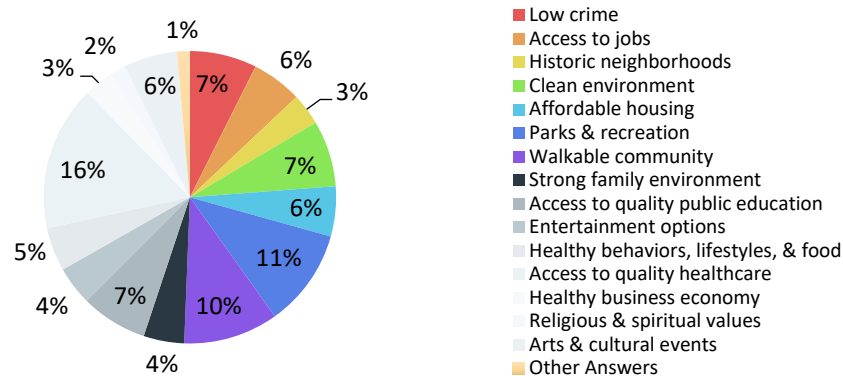
La Crosse's Strengths

- Respondents indicated La Crosse's natural beauty, proximity to friends and family, sense of safety, access to healthcare and quality schools, and recreation opportunities as top strengths of La Crosse

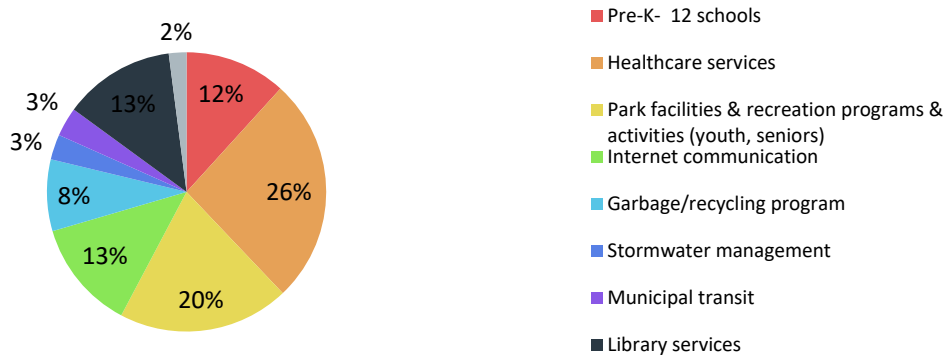
If you're a resident, what are the top reasons you choose to live in the City of La Crosse? (Select up to 3)



What primary factors improve the quality of life in La Crosse? (Select up to 3)



What services have the biggest impact on your quality of life? (Select up to 3)





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La Crosse's Resources & Recreation

- Respondents highly rated the Mississippi River and streams, groundwater and air quality, scenic views and developed bluffs, and wetlands as important resources and environmental assets in La Crosse
- Respondents identified walking, biking, and scenic trails, parks, picnics, and playgrounds, and swimming pools, splash pads, and beaches as top recreational priorities

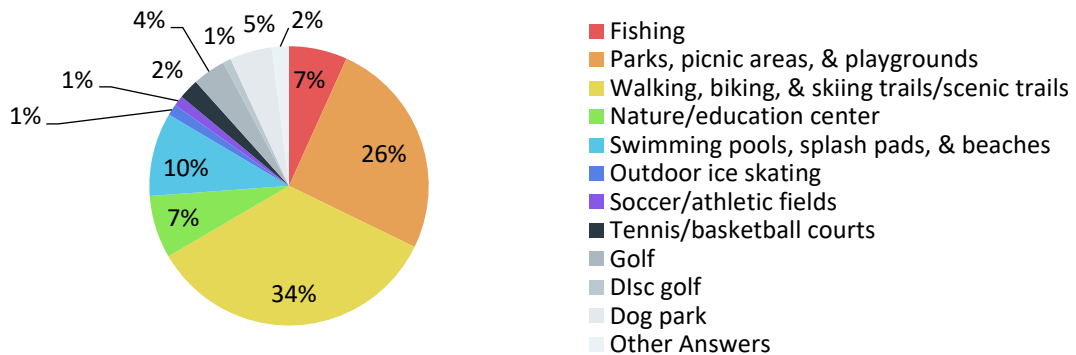
What are the most important resources to protect? (Select up to 2)



What are the most important environmental items to you? (Select up to 2)



What are your top recreational priorities? (Select up to 3)

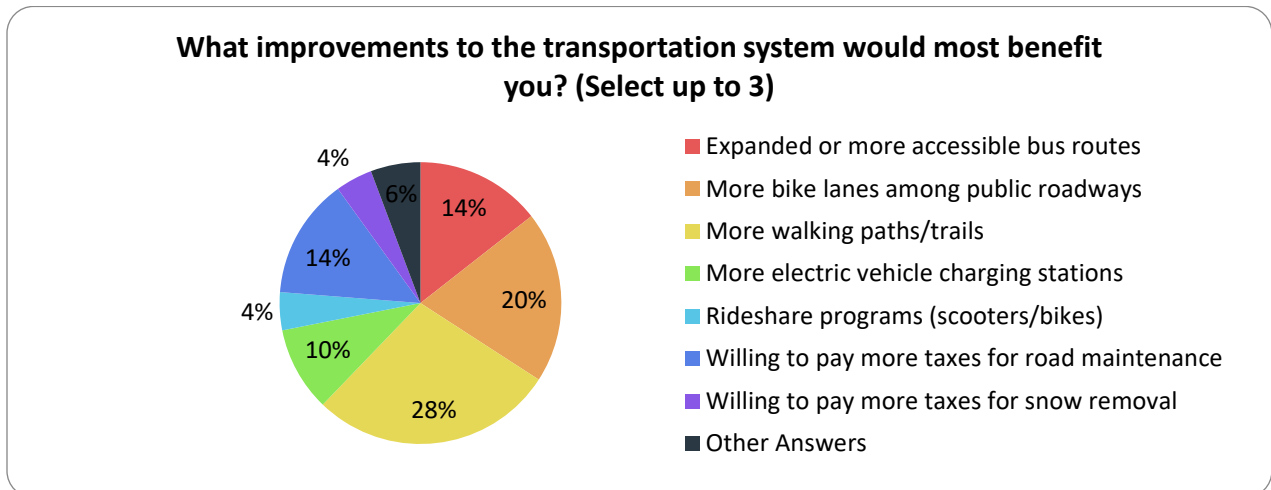
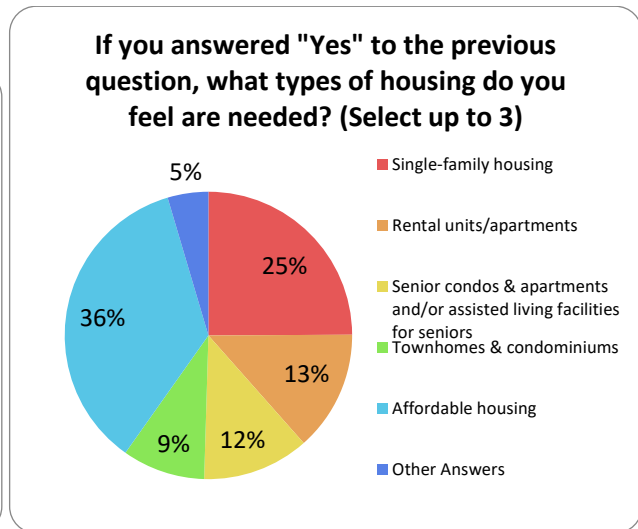
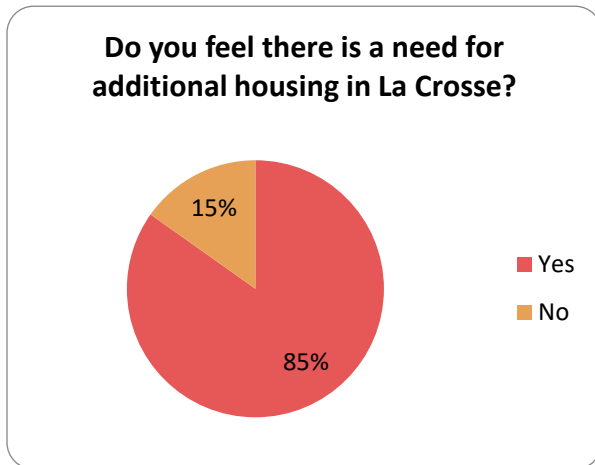




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Housing, Economic Development, & Transportation

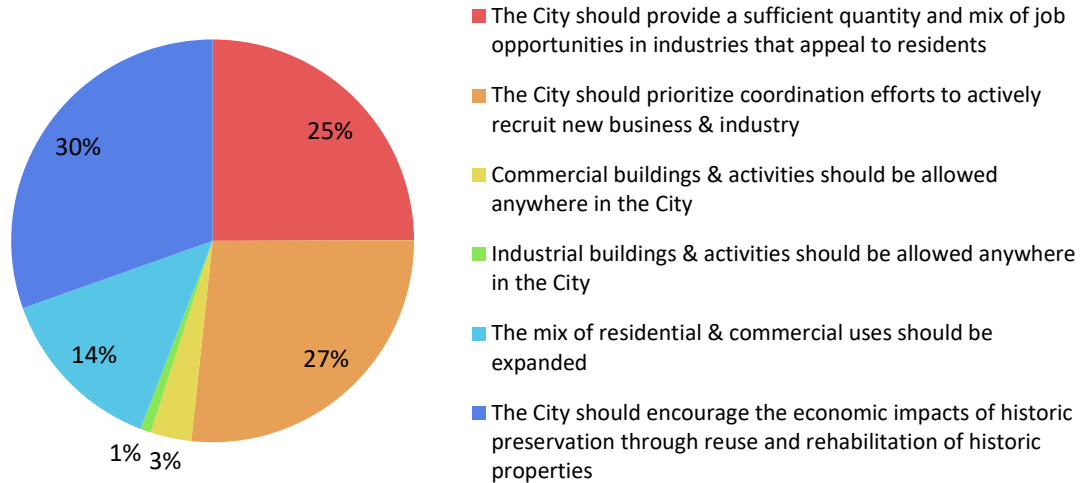
- A significant majority of respondents feel there is a need for additional housing opportunities in La Crosse, especially affordable housing options, single-family housing, and rental units/apartments
- Nearly half of respondents identified more walking paths/trails and more bike lanes along roadways as priority transportation items to address
- Nearly a third of respondents hope the City can encourage the economic impact of historic preservation through reuse and rehabilitation of historic properties
- One-quarter of respondents identified as an economic development priority ensuring that there are a mix of job opportunities and industries within the City that appeal to residents, and over a quarter of respondents supported attracting new businesses and industries
- Nearly one-fifth of respondents desire more greenery/natural elements in downtown La Crosse
- Respondents would like to see more outdoor event/gathering space, farmers markets, and pedestrian/bicycle-friendly sidewalks/infrastructure in downtown La Crosse



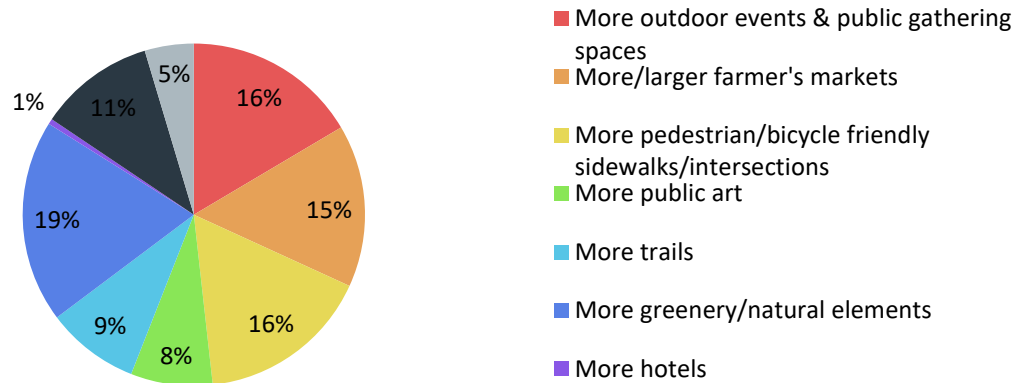


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Which do you most agree with in terms of economic development? (Select up to 2)



What are your top three desired downtown amenities? (Select up to 3)



La Crosse Neighborhoods (Topic-Specific Survey)

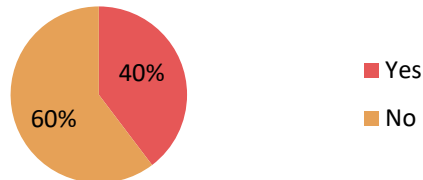
- In general, respondents indicated there have been improvements over time in maintaining traditional neighborhoods but that further investment is needed
- In general, respondents indicated there is a lack of affordable rental units in the City even though more apartment buildings are being built
- Nearly half of respondents do not feel that growth of hospitals and colleges is supported in neighborhoods due to the high percentage of student renters, maintenance concerns and littering, and the appearance of areas where campuses and neighborhoods intersect
- There is general consensus that neighborhoods are not highly delineated by gateway attributes, but there is disagreement over the role of government in funding such items



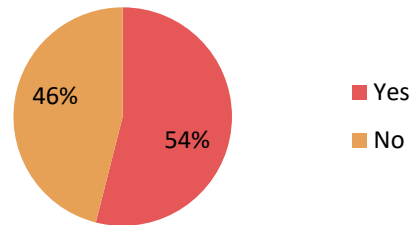
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- Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated there are neighborhoods that are not seen as being “safe”, particularly due to concerns about drug use, theft (particularly of bicycles), and break-ins
- Increased street lighting is generally seen as helpful to increase feelings of safety
- A significant majority of respondents are concerned about the upkeep of student rental housing
- The majority of respondents indicated that neighborhood schools are seen as favorably contributing to neighborhood character and walkability
- Respondents also indicated the following topics as areas of concern/priority for focus in the Comprehensive Plan:
 - Desire to be able to shop and dine within neighborhoods
 - Desire for better coordination between the City and property owners to improve homes
 - Desire for there to be overall more “pride” in neighborhoods
 - Desire for more active coordination from the institutions to improve surrounding areas
 - Desire for more affordable housing options specifically for families
 - Desire for more widespread traffic calming measures to improve walkability/bikeability within and between neighborhoods

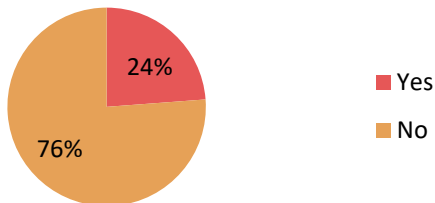
One of the major goals from the 2002 Comprehensive Plan was to “Revitalize traditional neighborhoods and protect and improve single family housing.” Do you feel this was accomplished?



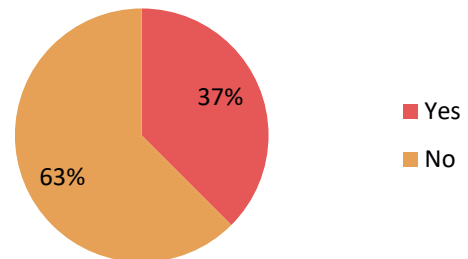
Do you feel hospital and college growth is supported in La Crosse’s neighborhoods?



Are neighborhoods adequately delineated by gateways such as monument signs, public art, distinctive landscaping, or banners?

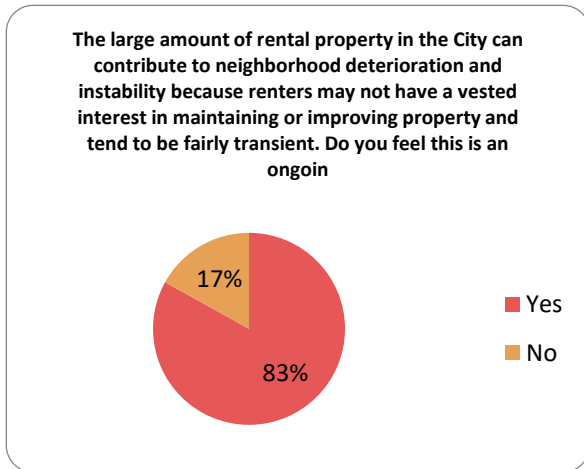
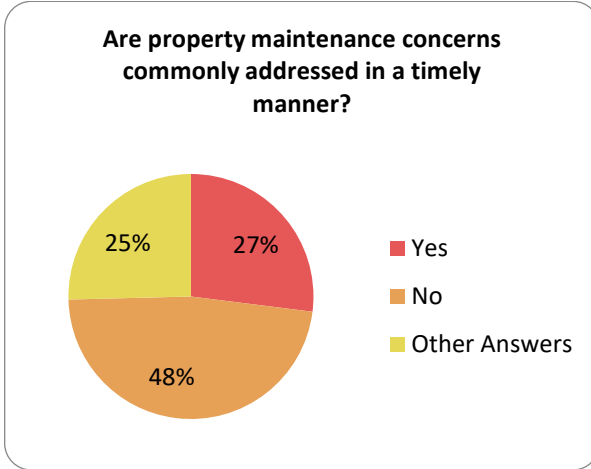


Are neighborhoods across the City seen as being “safe”?



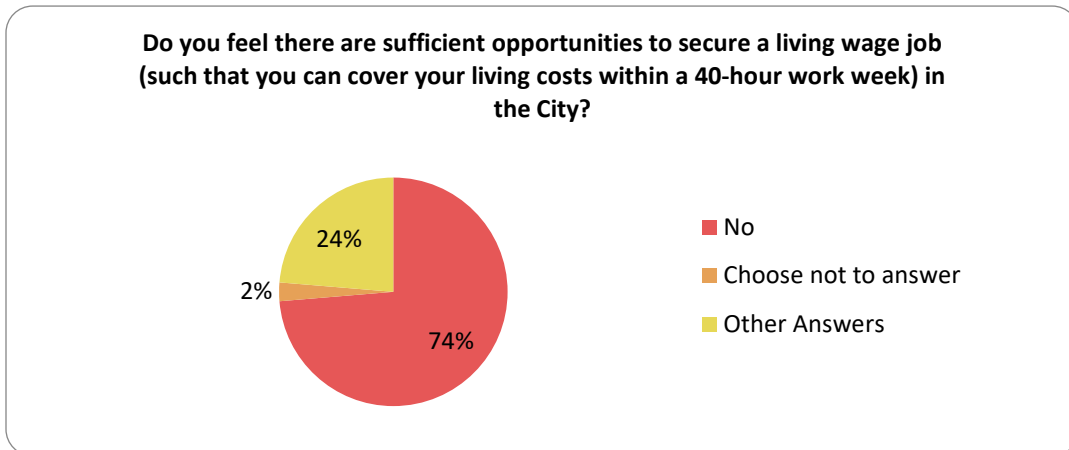


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Economic Development (Topic-Specific Survey)

- The majority of respondents to this survey live and work in the City of La Crosse (71.2%), live in La Crosse but commute outside of the City for work (10.9%), and live outside of the City but commute into La Crosse for work (9.6%)
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents indicated there are not enough opportunities to secure a living wage job in the City
- Over a third of respondents highlighted higher education as a major strength, followed by quality of life for employees and the historic downtown business district
- Respondents indicated access to childcare and quality housing as the top priorities for economic development
- Respondents highlighted the Northside as an area in need of focused redevelopment efforts
- A quarter of respondents indicated healthcare (including childcare and elder care) has strong growth potential over the next 5-10 years, followed by manufacturing (10%) and education (10%)



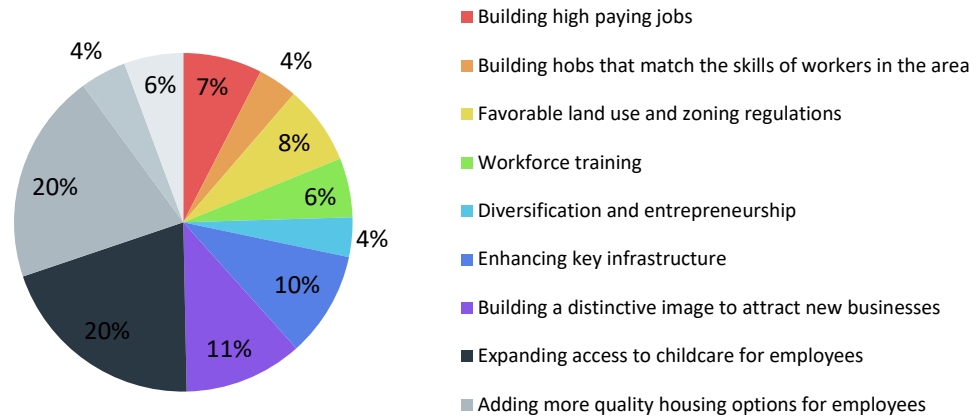


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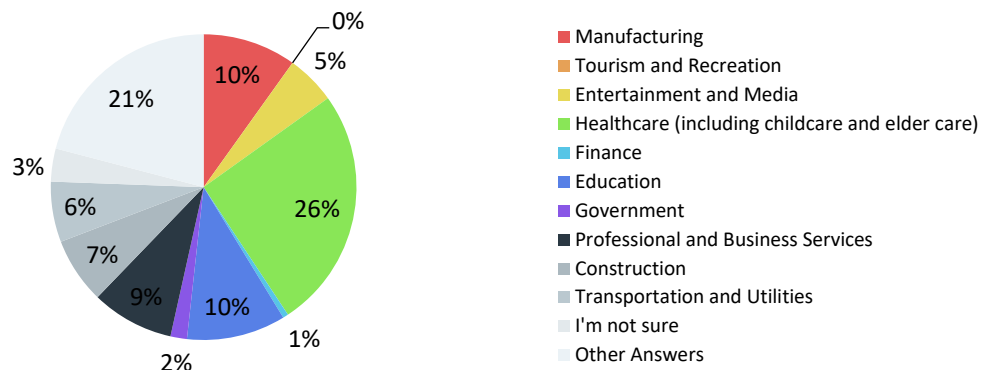
What do you feel are the City's economic strengths (Select up to 2)?



Which of the following factors do you feel are the most pressing to address from an economic development perspective (Select up to 3)?



Which industries do you feel have the most potential for growth in the City over the next 5-10 years? (Select up to 3)





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Historic Preservation (Topic-Specific Survey)

- The majority of respondents indicated that historic preservation is very important for La Crosse because it defines the City's character and differentiates the City
- Respondents indicated the following as major obstacles to historic preservation:
 - Cost of upkeep/funding challenges
 - Lack of options for retrofit to ADA/fire safety regulations/new codes
 - Functionality/desire for multi-use buildings
- Respondents indicated the following as historic and/or cultural resources that are under-represented:
 - Native American/indigenous heritage/history
 - Immigrant heritage/history
 - Black cultural resources
 - Hmong heritage/history
- Respondents indicated the following should be prioritized moving forward:
 - Preserving multi-perspective histories
 - Increasing funding
 - Identification of high-priority vulnerable properties
 - More opportunities for public involvement

Disability Access (Topic-Specific Survey)

- Respondents indicated that improvements in bike trails and marked bike lanes have helped improve disability access
- Respondents indicated the City has been unsuccessful in the following areas of improving disability access:
 - Snow removal from private property owners is an issue
 - Disability access in parks/more benches to sit and catch your breath
 - Curb cuts tend to direct people into traffic rather than across the street directly
 - Crossing on all legs of intersections (particularly Cameron/4th, Cass/4th, La Crosse St/Copeland/3rd/4th)
 - Marsh trails could be paved to increase accessibility
 - Railings on ramps are helpful
 - Clearing snow in the winter is a big priority
- Respondents indicated there is a need for broader awareness of the different transportation modes available for disabled individuals (such as rides to/from doctors appointments)
- Respondents were generally in favor of maintaining exterior appearances of historic buildings but favored even simple modernizations to increase accessibility, such as ramps, elevators, and bathroom updates
- Respondents were generally in favor of enhancing the representation of disabled individuals on City committees

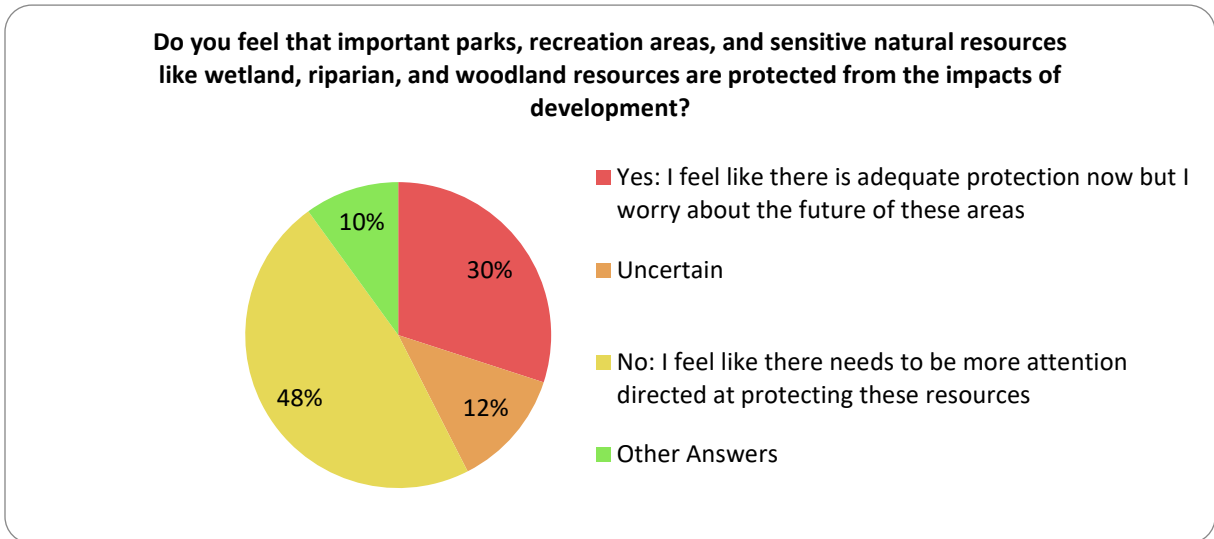
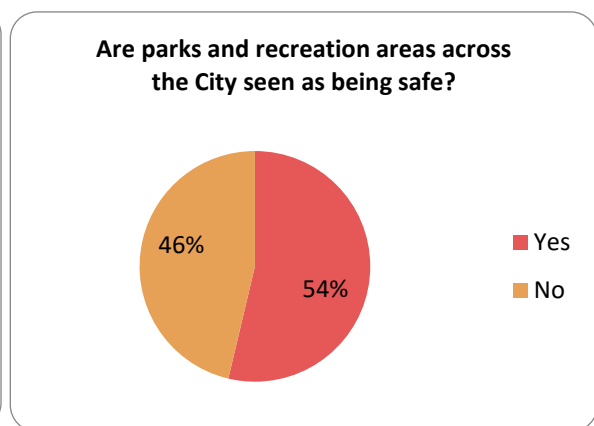
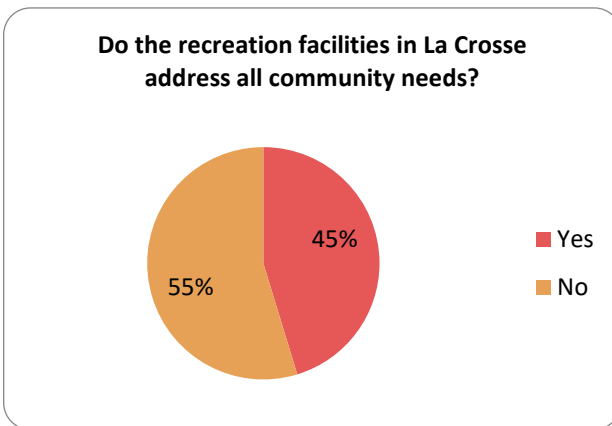
Parks & Recreation

- Respondents indicated a need for a walking trail for older adults that is paved and flat
- Respondents indicated that park maintenance is not evenly distributed among the City's sites
- Respondents indicated a need for more off-leash dog recreation areas and winter athletic facilities
- Respondents indicated there is a need for safety improvements especially at Houska Park and Trane Park
- Respondents indicated there has been general improvement in vegetated corridors except for La Crosse St



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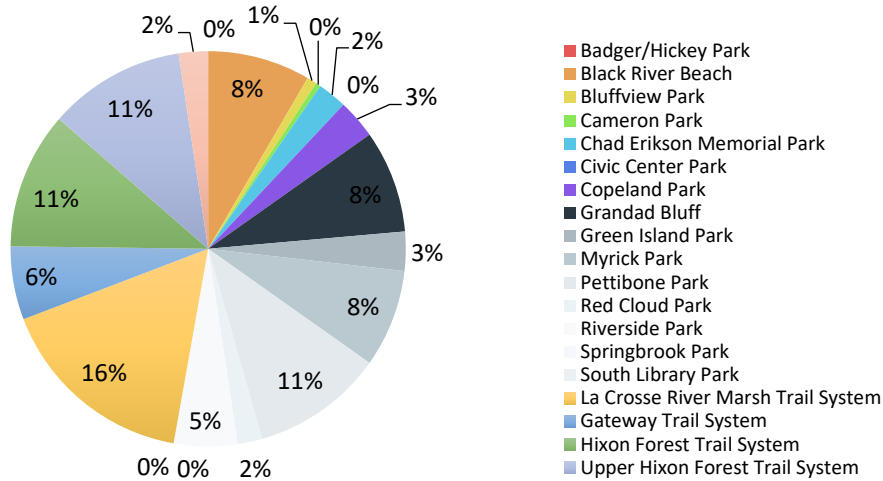
- One of the major goals from the 2002 Comprehensive Plan was to “Establish a parkway system to create an interconnected system of attractively landscaped roadways that connect the City’s major parks and open spaces.” Respondents seemed generally unaware of this goal and do not feel there are significant connections across the City
- Respondents highlighted the following recreational areas as contributing significantly to the City’s character:
 - Hixon Forest
 - La Crosse marsh
 - Bluffs/Grandad Bluff
 - Riverside Park





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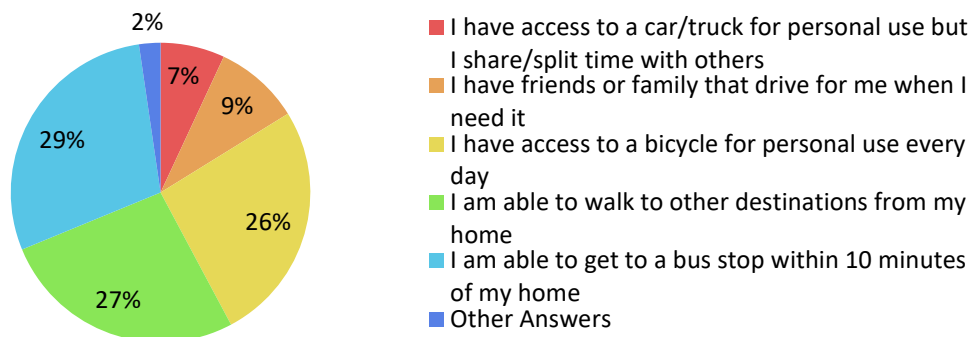
Which parks, recreation, and/or open space areas do you feel are most susceptible or most at-risk to the negative impacts of climate change? (select all that apply)



Transportation (Topic-Specific Survey)

- Nearly a third of respondents indicated they could reach a bus stop within 10 minutes of their home, and over one-quarter of respondents had access to a bicycle for daily use
- 92% of respondents indicated they felt “mostly unsafe” for biking
- A significant majority of respondents indicated walking and biking as “mostly inconvenient”
- Over three-quarters of respondents indicated they do not take public transportation, and over one-fifth of respondents indicated that no improvements/changes would increase their transit usage
- Respondents indicated their top priorities to improve the transportation system were to make walking safer and more pleasant (17%), expand bus service (15%), and create an Airport-Downtown transport (15%)
- Respondents also supported plans for more train hubs to Minneapolis and Milwaukee, adding more dedicated bike lanes, and promoting business that serve walkers/bikers

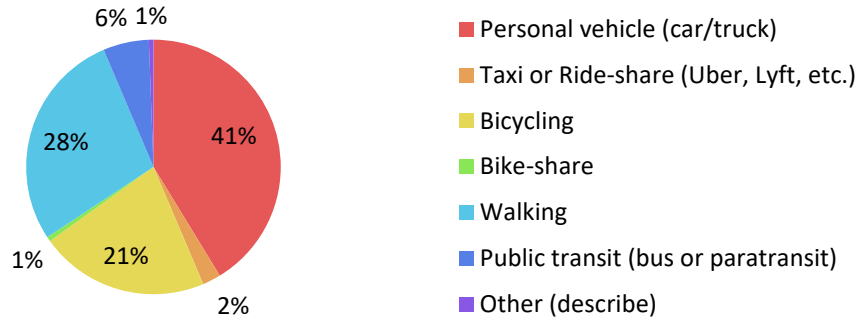
What modes of travel do you have access to? (Select all that apply)



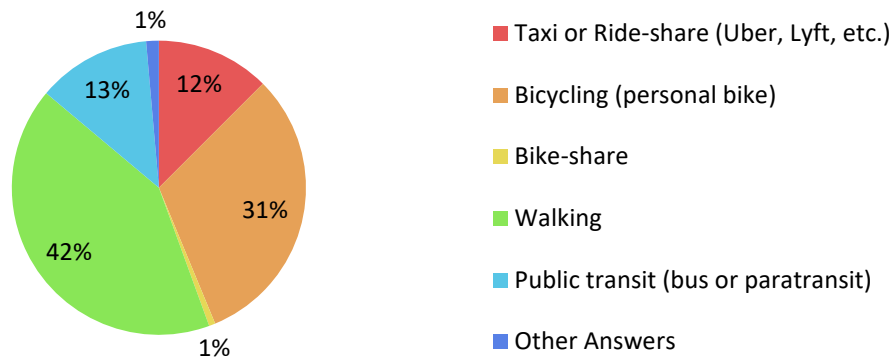


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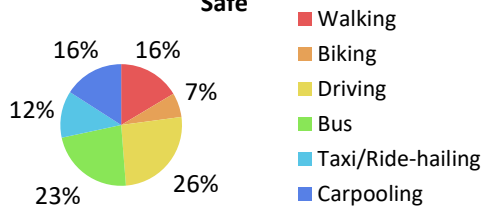
What are your primary modes of travel within the City of La Crosse? (Select up to 3)



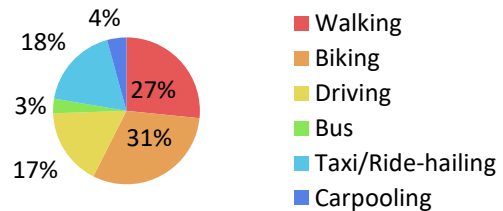
What modes of travel have you used within the City of La Crosse in the past year? (Select all that apply)



Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is safe for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of respondents that answered "Mostly Safe"



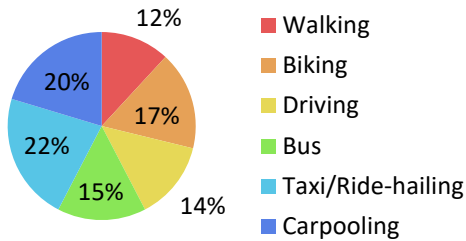
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is safe for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of respondents that answered "Somewhat Safe"



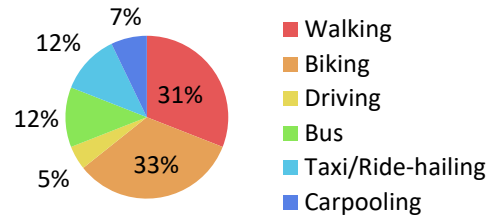


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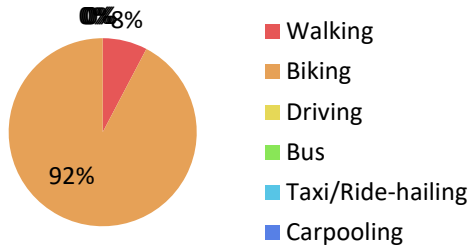
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is safe for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of respondents that answered "Neutral"



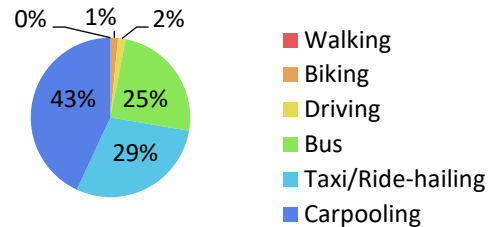
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is safe for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of respondents that answered "Somewhat Unsafe"



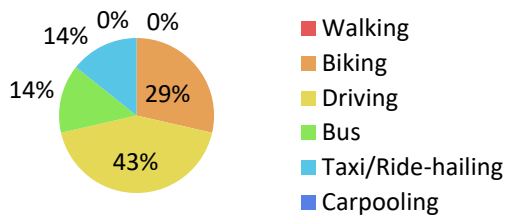
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is safe for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of respondents that answered "Mostly Unsafe"



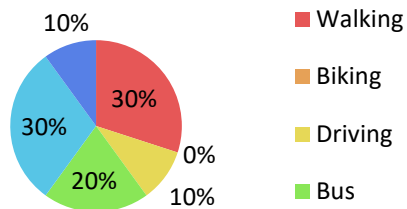
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is safe for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of respondents that answered "Unsure"



Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is convenient for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of residents who answered "Mostly Convenient"



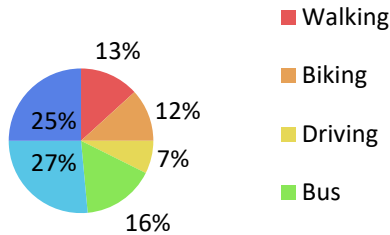
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is convenient for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of residents who answered "Somewhat Convenient"



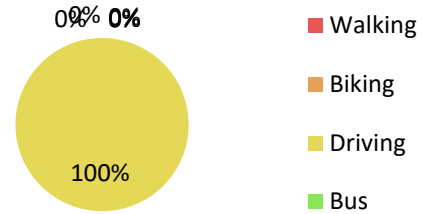


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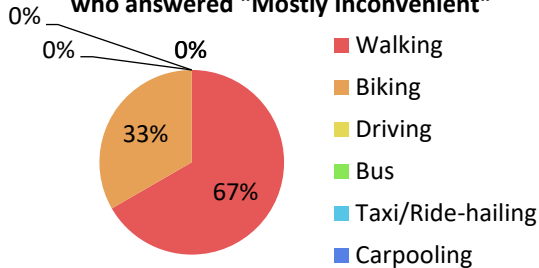
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is convenient for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of residents who answered "Neutral"



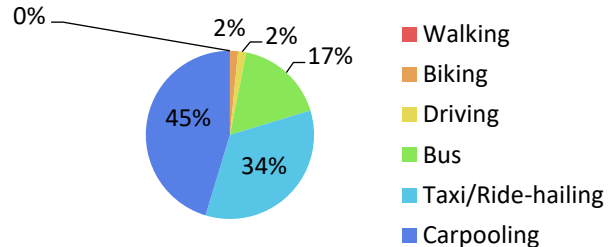
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is convenient for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of residents who answered "Somewhat Convenient"



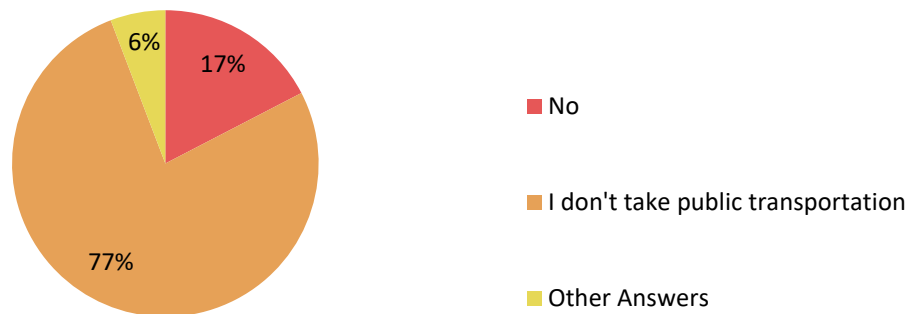
Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is convenient for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of residents who answered "Mostly Inconvenient"



Do you feel La Crosse's transportation system is convenient for all modes of transportation (walkers, bicyclers, drivers, etc.)? Percentage of residents who answered "Unsure"



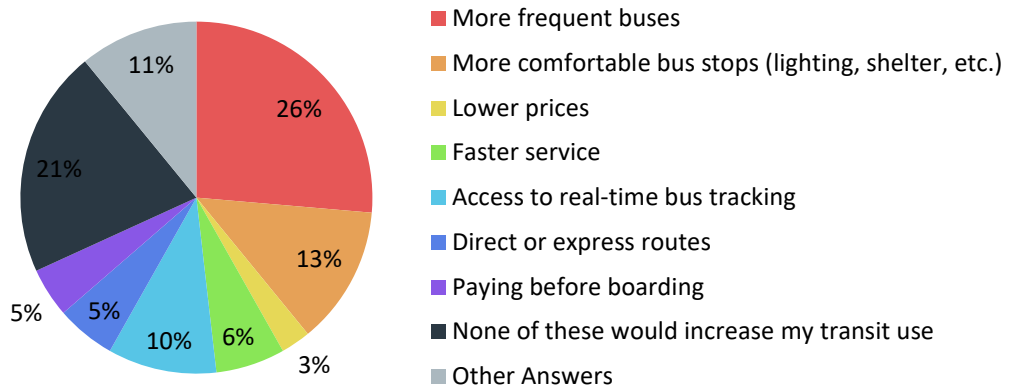
If you take public transportation, do the routes and stops meet your daily needs?



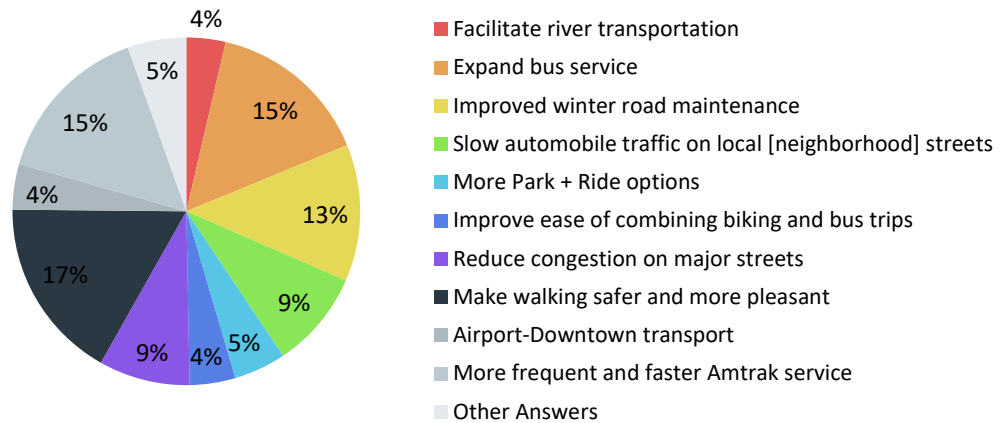


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**What improvements would increase your use of public transit in La Crosse?
 (Select up to 2)**



**Which priorities should the City focus on to improve and maintain the City's
 transportation system? (Select up to 3)**



Visual Preference Survey

The Visual Preference Survey gave respondents an opportunity to indicate their preferences for how buildings, districts, open spaces, and corridors are designed in La Crosse. The survey presented a series of sample images in different categories (including urban neighborhoods, main streets, parks, public spaces, natural environments and wildlife habitats, green infrastructure, public art, single-and-multi-family residences, streets, parking, bike lanes, and wayfinding and signage) and asked respondents to select the images they felt were appropriate or appealing for La Crosse. Respondents could also submit their own images and leave comments indicating why they liked or disliked certain image characteristics.



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- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **urban neighborhoods** (21%, 19%, and 18% left-right respectively).
 - Respondents generally indicated preferences for a mix of living environments emphasizing walkability, space for nature/greenery, with historic and more modern architecture seamlessly mixed
 - Respondents were generally in favor of mixed zoning and shopping and dining options within walking distance of residences



- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **main streets** (23%, 17%, and 11% left-right, respectively).
 - Colorful facades, a warm, inviting environment, and business variety were prominent preferences
 - Respondents expressed a desire for space for people, not just cars



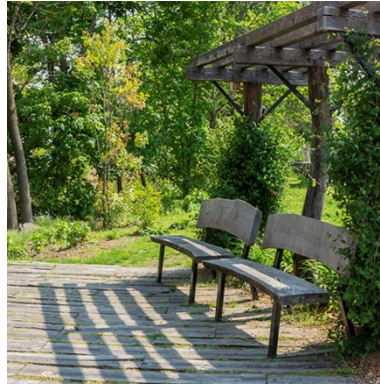


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- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **parks** (17%, 14%, and 14% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents emphasized preferences for parks with a balance of function, style, and natural space
 - Mature trees, natural surfaces, accessible spaces/activities for all ages, and updated facilities were mentioned as preferences for parks



- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **public spaces** (19%, 16%, and 15% left-right, respectively).
 - Preferences focus on public spaces that are inviting/welcoming, that incorporate more greenery (grass and mature shade trees) and less man-made elements, incorporate art/creativity, and allow space for individuals or small gatherings





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- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **natural environments and wildlife habitats** (16%, 14%, and 13% left-right, respectively).
 - Preferences focus on native plants/animals and a diversity of natural landscapes that showcase the region's beauty, accessibility for all to enjoy natural areas, education opportunities, and allowing natural areas to be "messy" rather than overly manicured



- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **green infrastructure** (21%, 19%, and 17% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents indicated green infrastructure should be used to limit motor vehicle traffic and help create space for pedestrians and biking
 - Respondents viewed permeable pavement favorably to help control stormwater
 - Respondents generally expressed support for adding more green elements including flowers, shrubs, swales, and trees





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- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **public art** (18%, 16%, and 14% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents indicated a preference for public art that features local artists and inclusive and diverse perspectives and history
 - Respondents indicated a preference for public art that is low-maintenance, interactive, and colorful
 - Murals and natural materials were favored



- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **single family homes** (19%, 17%, and 15% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents indicated a preference for a variety of housing types and styles that maintain La Crosse's unique City character, generally on smaller lots with sustainable maintenance requirements



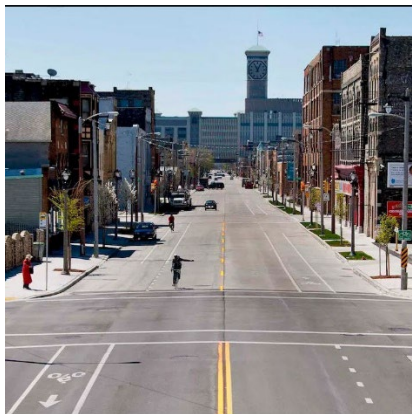


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- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **multi family homes** (11%, 11%, and 10% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents indicated a preference for exploring new ways to utilize existing or historic buildings for multi family housing options, especially with mixed-use options
 - Respondents generally steered towards lower footprint buildings rather than large apartment complexes



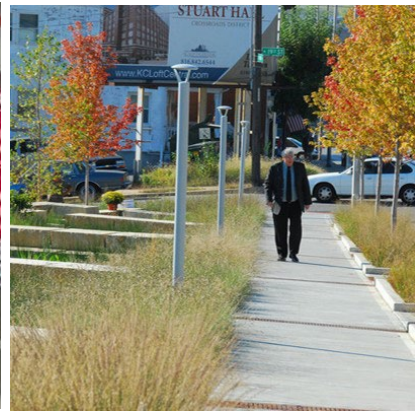
- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **streets** (13%, 13%, and 12% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents indicated a preference for natural elements along streets (greenery, trees)
 - Respondents indicated a preference for more space for sustainable, multi-modal commuting (walking, biking) with wider sidewalks and narrower impervious surface elements





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- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **parking and service** (20%, 17%, and 15% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents were not in favor of large expanses of uninterrupted pavement used for parking – incorporating vegetation including trees for shade, angled parking, permeable pavement, and multi-level parking options were highlighted as preferable designs
 - Respondents were interested in exploring options for underground parking



- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse's **bike lanes** (26%, 23%, and 18% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents were strongly in favor of physically separated/protected bike lanes





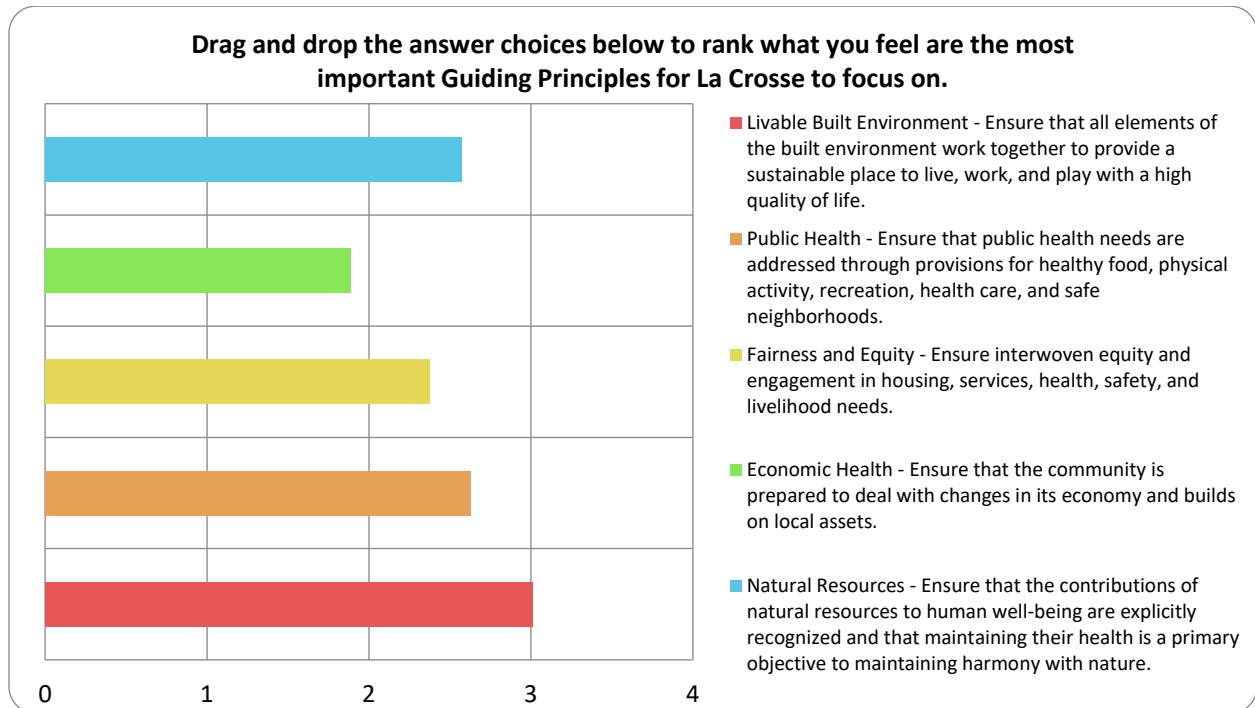
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- The following three images were the most popular images chosen for La Crosse’s **wayfinding and signage** (20%, 18%, and 16% left-right, respectively).
 - Respondents were generally in favor of attractive yet functional and easy-to-read wayfinding and signage elements that are unique to La Crosse



Guiding Principles Survey

The Guiding Principles Survey asked respondents to identify and rank their top priorities to guide La Crosse’s future. A higher number along the X-axis represents the principle was highly ranked. The highest ranked guiding principle was “Livable Built Environment” followed by “Public Health” and “Natural Resources.”





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Voting Game

The Voting Game asked respondents to identify their top 5 priorities to focus on in the Comprehensive Plan. Over 400 people participated in the voting game. The most popular votes were for the following five categories:

- Conserve open space & biodiversity
- High quality surface water & groundwater
- City-wide climate action
- Parks & recreation facilities & services
- Local food production & affordability

