

# MIDWESTERN SUSTAINABILITY: THE “WRIGHT” FIT

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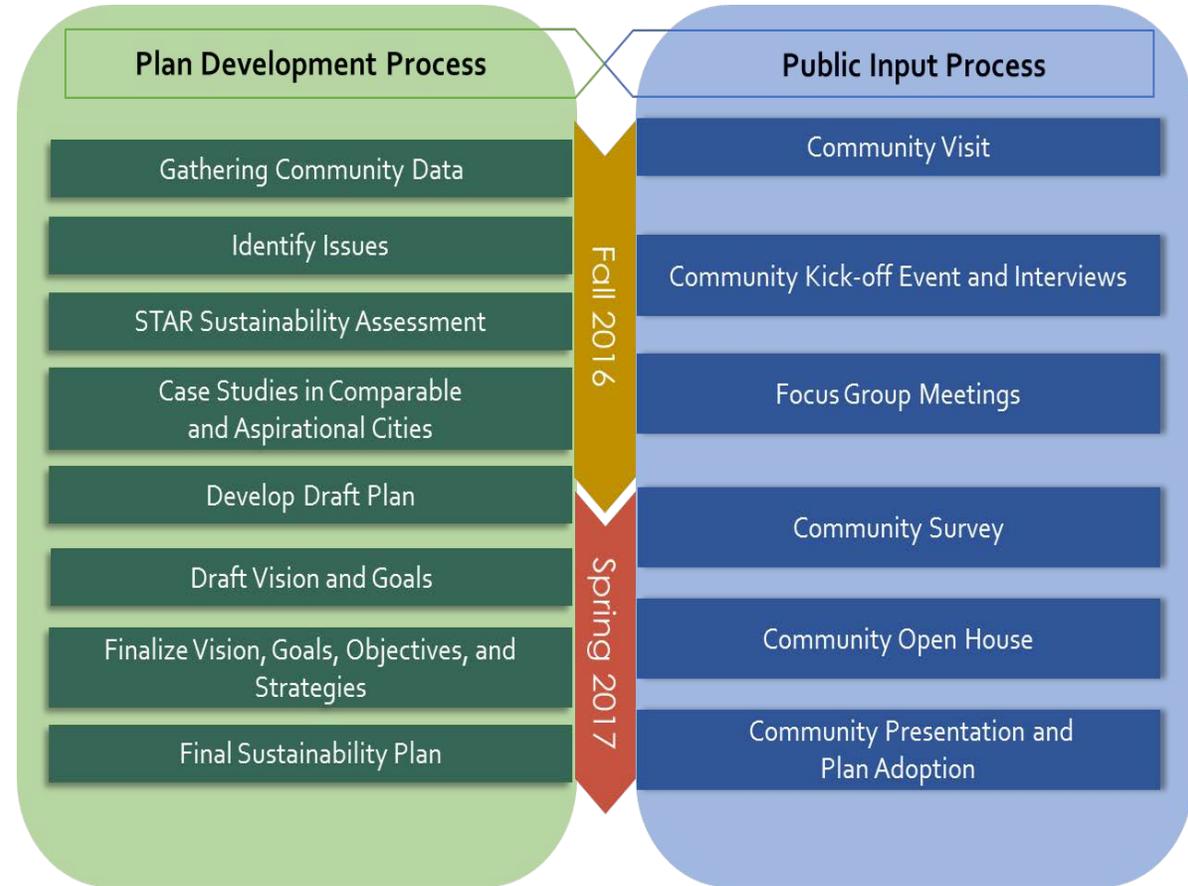
# WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS



“Sustainable communities are those in which current generations are able to meet their social, economic, and environmental needs without compromising the ability of future generations to do so as well. Sustainability spans topics that range from social justice to workforce development to ecological health and resiliency.”

-IISC Sustainability Definition

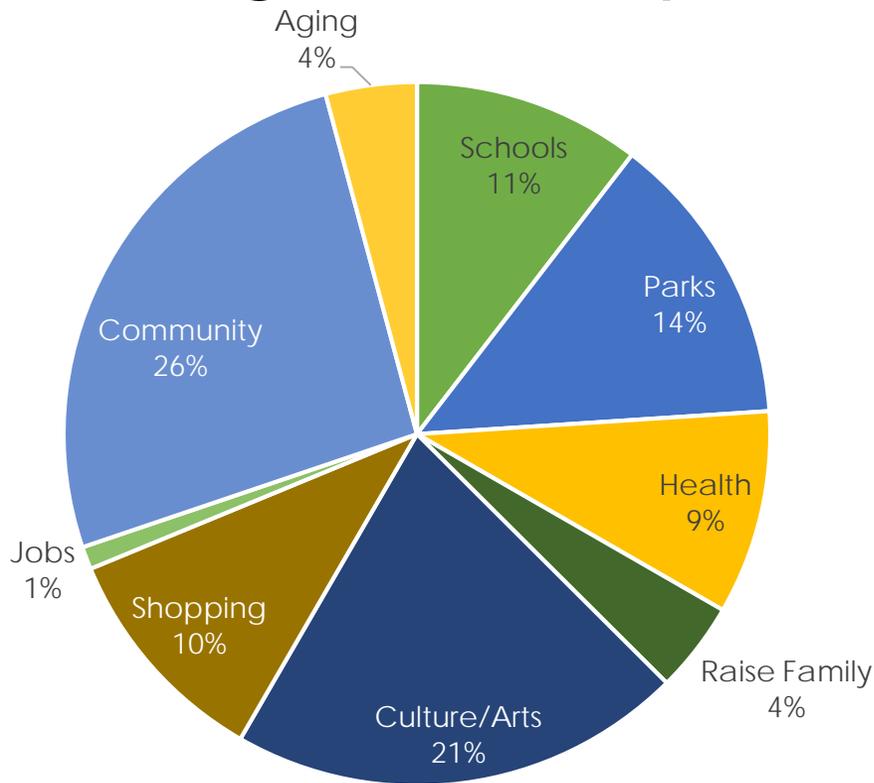
# PROJECT OVERVIEW



# GREAT RIVER CITY FESTIVAL

64 PERSONAL INTERVIEWS – SEPTEMBER 2016

## Best things in Mason City



# NOVEMBER FOCUS GROUPS

43 PARTICIPANTS



Business & Service Clubs - 6



Arts & Culture - 6



Faith Community - 2



Landlords - Developers & Neighborhood Associations - 3



Social Service Agencies & Health - 10



Government & Law Enforcement - 9



Education - 7

# FEBRUARY COMMUNITY SURVEY

## VISION STATEMENT

A statewide leader in sustainability practices with thriving local businesses and employment opportunities for all. The community will work together towards a peaceful, culturally vibrant, resilient and family friendly place.

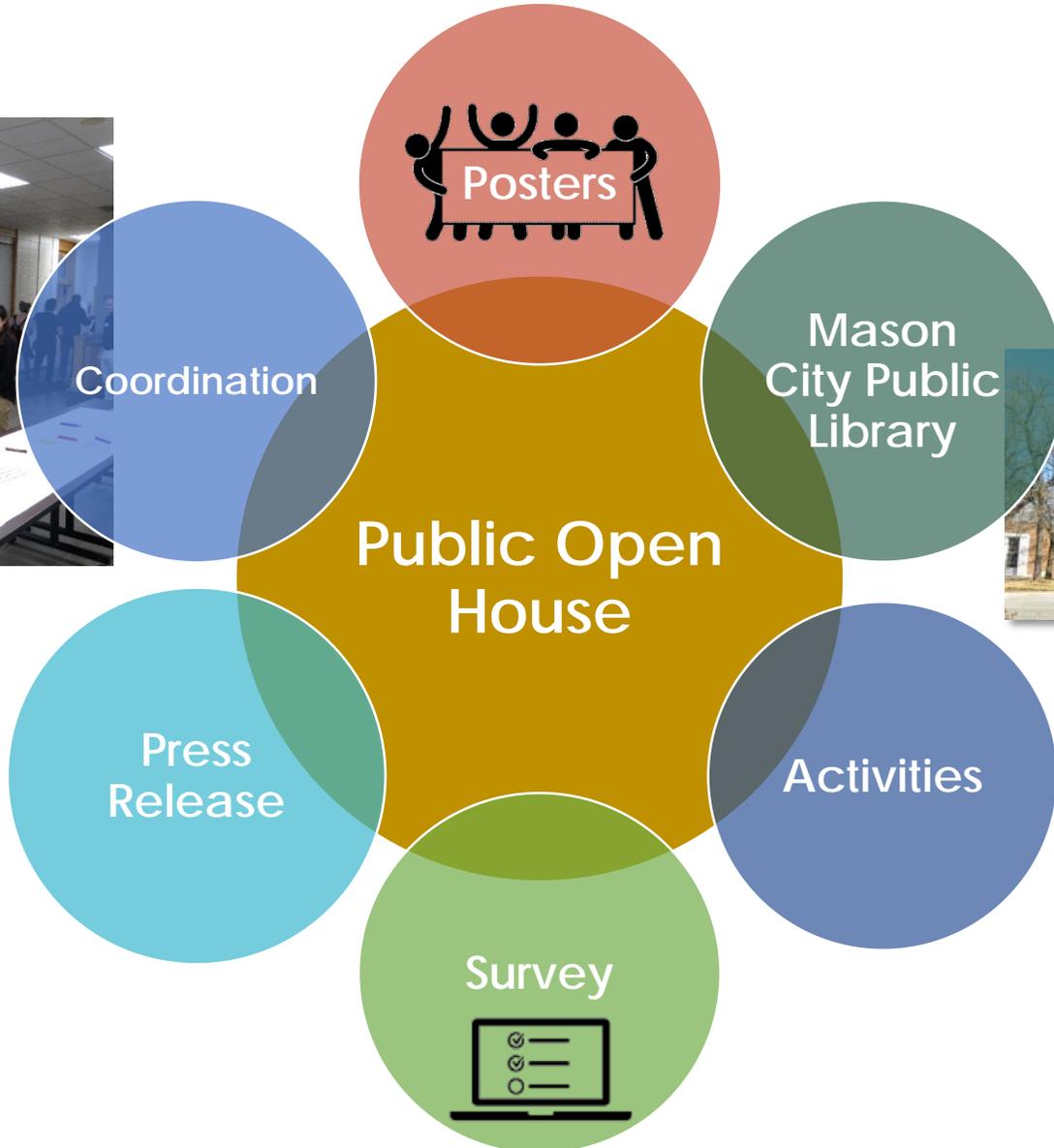
**38% of respondents  
(578) chose this vision  
statement**

### Key Findings:

- ✓ Coalition
- ✓ Tax incentives
- ✓ Environment
- ✓ Diversity



# MARCH PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE



# SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

## Exceeding Expectations



5.3% **walk or bike to work**



EPA **air quality** report shows **0 days** of unhealthy air



**Biological integrity** (water) supports aquatic life and fish consumption



**Unemployment rate** decreased 2.9% (2010-16)



Over 75% **live within 1 mile** of a **community venue**



**5 designated historic districts**



## Doing Well - Almost There



**Pollutants** (e. coli) in drinking water **declined** (2012-15)



**Safe stormwater** management permits – (NPDES) compliant



Median household **income increased \$1,300** (2010-14)



**Exporting industries:** Manufacturing, Health Care, and Transportation



Violent **crime rates declined** (2013-15)



Emergency **preparedness** – (NIMS) compliant



**Voter turnout** increased to **36%** (2010-13)



AARP **Livability Index** ranks **low** in job access, transportation, & environment

## Need Improvement



Housing and employment opportunities **downtown**



**Transportation costs** (27%) are **8%** higher than national average



Drove alone **commuting** is **5%** higher than national average



**Bacteria** in water prevents swimming



**Lost 47 business** establishments (2009-14)



Lost **700 jobs** (2010-16)



**Post-secondary educational attainment** decreased (2009-14)



Share of creative industries **declined** (2010-15)



The **poverty rate** (15.5%), is **3% higher** than the **statewide average**



**Poverty** among vulnerable populations **increased** (2000-14)



**3rd grade reading** proficiency (65%), is **11.7% below** the **statewide average** (2015-16 school year)

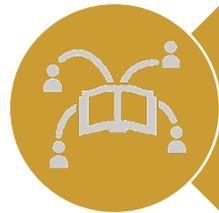


Overall **Graduation Rate** (87.6%), is **3.2% below** the **statewide average**

# SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS AREAS



**Community Engagement**



**Social Fairness and Inclusion**



**Built and Natural Environment**



**A Prospering Local Economy**



# Community Engagement

**GOAL** - The community will drive sustainability efforts through education and action with citizens and public leadership working together.

**91 out of 578** people who responded to a survey said **YES**, they would participate in a coalition

Focus group results identified a need to **work together to make positive changes**



Public private partnership – Sustainability Council is formally adopted by the city

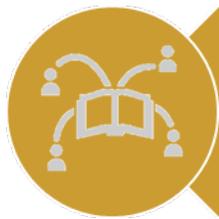


City Sustainability office



Coalition becomes a 501c3





# Social Fairness and Inclusion

**GOAL** - The community will collaborate to expand culture and arts, **celebrate diversity**, and increase educational success.

## Community Survey

**32%** support more minority representation on local boards

## Demographics

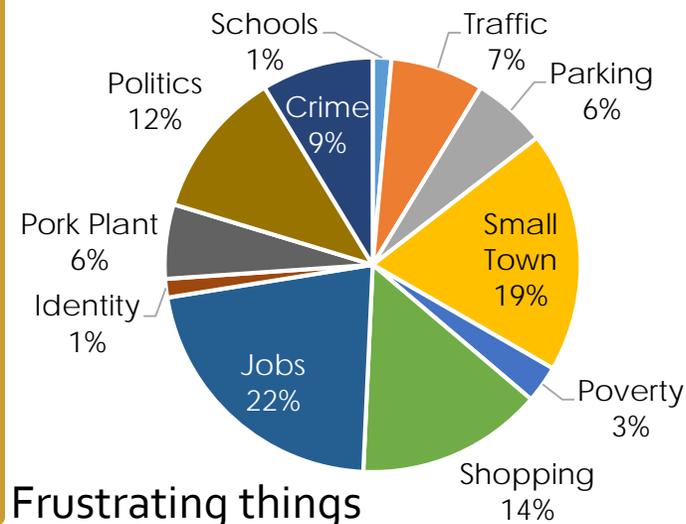
**9.3%** Mason City minority population

**18.9%** District minority enrollment



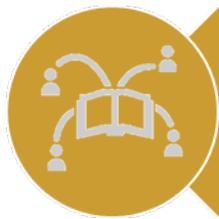
## Diversity

Increase diverse representation in business and community leadership



## Next Steps

- ✓ Boards and organizations have at least one minority member
- ✓ A community with a sense of inclusiveness



# Social Fairness and Inclusion

**GOAL** - The community will collaborate to expand culture and arts, celebrate diversity, and increase **educational success**.

## Focus Groups

- Lack of childcare – waiting lists
- Desire to attract young professionals

## Community Survey

**32%** support increased community resources for English Language Learners

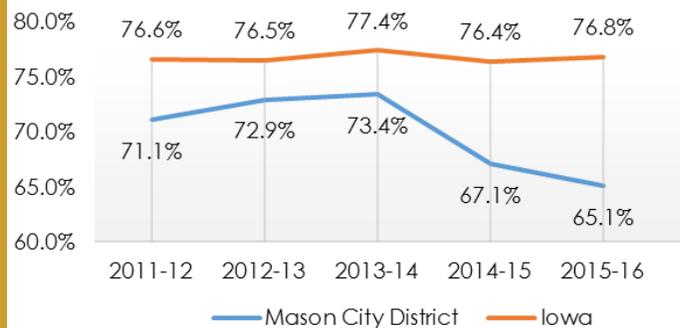


## Education

Increase educational opportunities and student success

### Percent Proficient - 3rd Grade Reading

Source: Iowa Department of Education



## Next Steps

- ✓ Childcare feasibility study
- ✓ Parent - school partnerships
- ✓ Policy changes – reduce barriers for childcare entrepreneurs
- ✓ Increased childcare slots



## Built and Natural Environment

**GOAL** - The community will promote **environmental awareness** and promote protection of ecosystems and natural areas

### Community Outreach

Environment was not a major issue during community outreach events



### Environmental Awareness

Expand understanding and awareness of natural systems

### Next steps:

- ✓ Create an awareness and education campaign to increase ecological literacy



## Built and Natural Environment

**GOAL** - The community will promote environmental awareness and promote **protection of ecosystems and natural areas**

### STARS

**Bacteria outbreaks** (such as E.coli.) prevent the use of public waters for recreation.

2008 floods and property buyouts



### Protection of Natural Resources

Water Quality  
&  
Flooding

### Next steps:

- ✓ Expand cooperation beyond municipal boundaries to form WMA
- ✓ Target sensitive areas along waterways for natural vegetation and stormwater best management practices
- ✓ Encourage private landowners to implement stormwater management practices on their property



## Built and Natural Environment

**GOAL** - The community will promote environmental awareness and promote protection of **ecosystems and natural areas**

### Community Survey

“More natural prairie areas in parks where there are large green spaces, instead of mowing.”



### Green Space and Parks Biodiversity

Promote biodiversity through expansion of wildlife habitat

### Next steps:

- ✓ Increase in biodiversity
- ✓ More resilient, functional green spaces



# A Prospering Local Economy

**GOAL** - The community will have a **thriving local economy** with livable wages for all

## STARS

**Lost 47** business establishments  
(2009-14)

### Focus Groups

- Desire for **locally owned** businesses



## Local Businesses

Grow small, locally owned  
businesses in nodes  
identified by the  
Comprehensive Plan

### Next steps:

- ✓ Study the use of local hiring and purchasing agreements
- ✓ Identify local loss of money
- ✓ Locally owned businesses are used for city contracts



# A Prospering Local Economy

**GOAL** - The community will have a thriving local economy with **livable wages** for all

## STARS

Median household income increased slower than rate of inflation

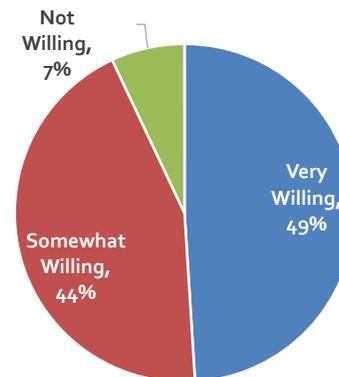
The poverty rate is **3% higher** than the statewide average



## Livable Wages

Use tax incentives to support businesses that increase the number of livable wage jobs

**Community Survey** willingness to support tax incentives



## Next steps:

- ✓ Study to determine local livable wage
- ✓ Develop and implement guidelines for tax incentives supporting livable wage jobs
- ✓ Use livable wage requirements for employees and contractors



# A Prospering Local Economy

**GOAL** - The community will have a **thriving local economy** with livable wages for all

## STARS

Lost over **700 jobs** (2010-16)

Exporting industries:  
Manufacturing, Health Care, and  
Transportation are doing well

### September Interviews

Revealed community tensions  
resulting from recent economic  
development decisions



## Industries that work for Mason City

Support businesses that align  
with the current economic  
base and community identity,  
yet diversify and expand  
products and services

## Next steps:

- ✓ Develop an economic and workforce development plan
  - Identify labor shortages
  - Establish target industries and desired business attributes



# A Prospering Local Economy

**GOAL** - The community will have a **thriving local economy** with livable wages for all

## STARS

Between 2009 and 2014, the population with a bachelor's degree decreased

### Focus groups

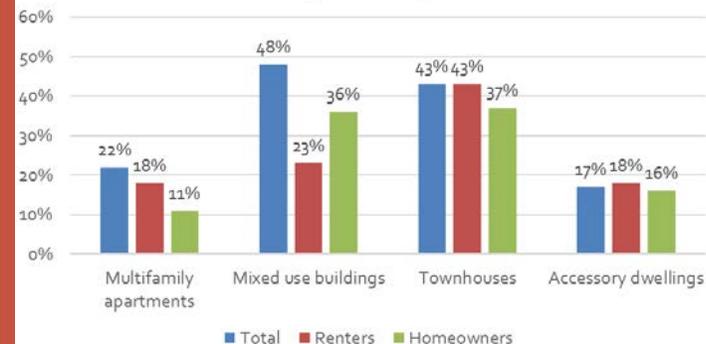
- Need for short term, high quality rental options
- Childcare waiting lists



## Opportunities for Young Professionals

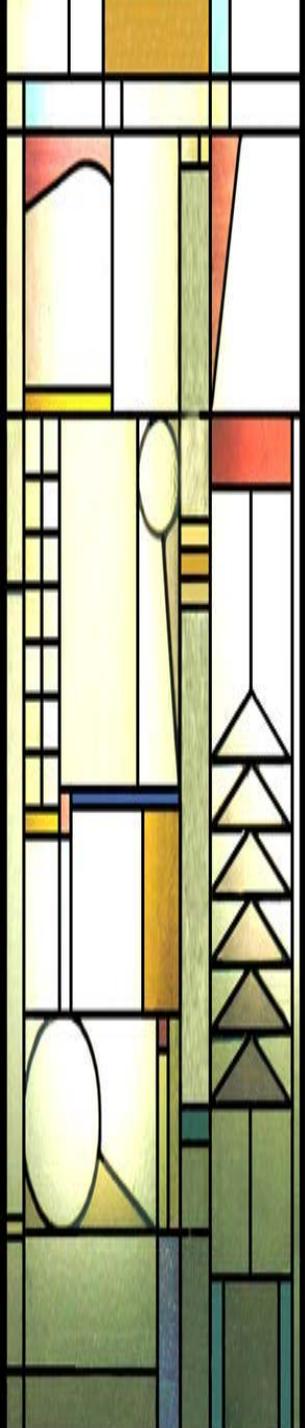
Attract and keep young professionals

Which of these rental types would you like to see more of:



### Next steps:

- ✓ A housing study identifies needs for young professionals
- ✓ Ensure adequate childcare is available



# A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Communication

Efficiencies and  
Costs Savings

Public  
Involvement

Community  
Assets and  
Identity

Educate and  
Excite

Resiliency