

MIDWESTERN SUSTAINABILITY: THE “WRIGHT” FIT

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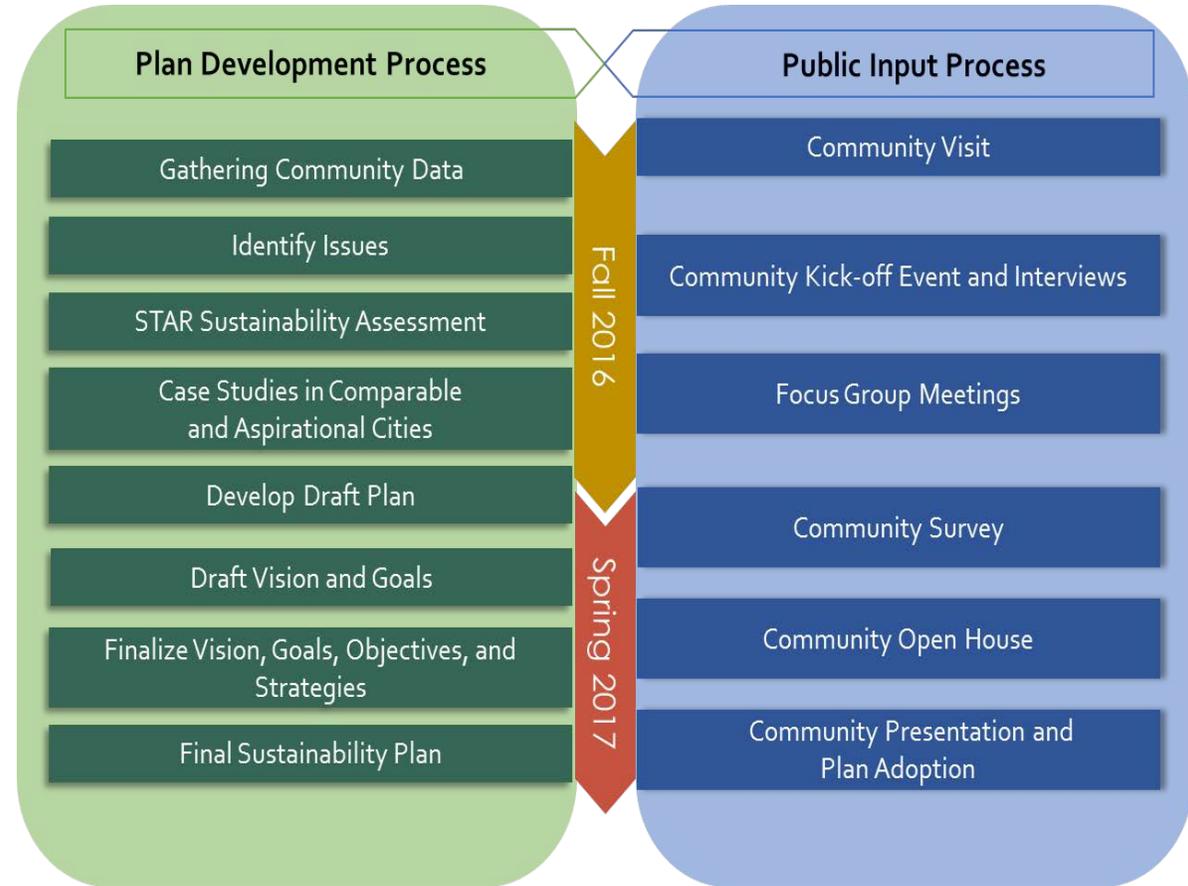
WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS



“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



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.

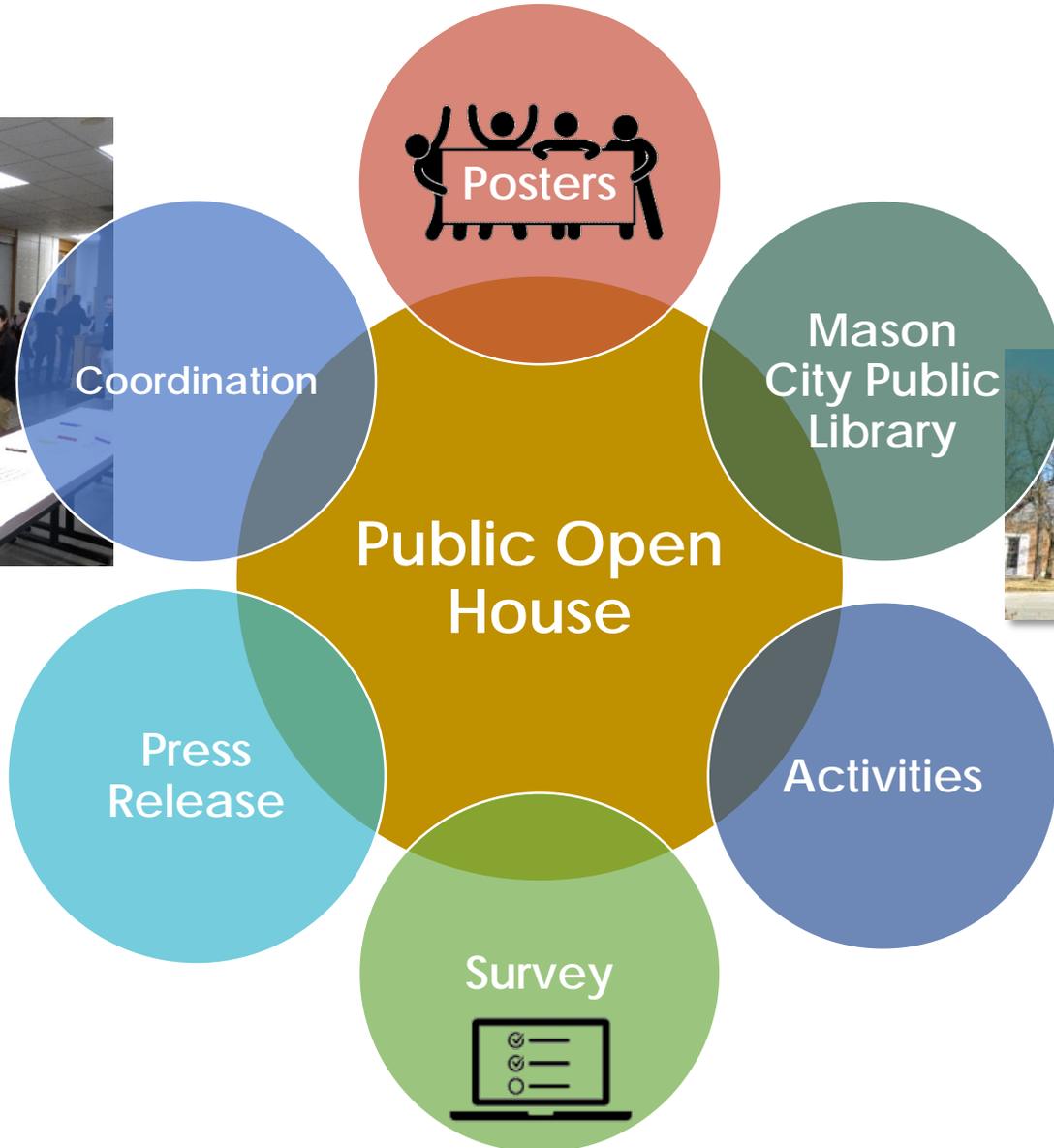
**38% of respondents
(578) chose this vision
statement**

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)

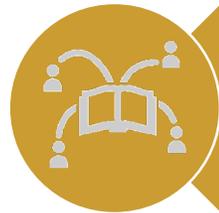


Overall **Graduation Rate** (87.6%), is **3.2% below** the **statewide average**

SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS AREAS



Community Engagement



Social Fairness and Inclusion



Built and Natural Environment



A Prospering Local Economy

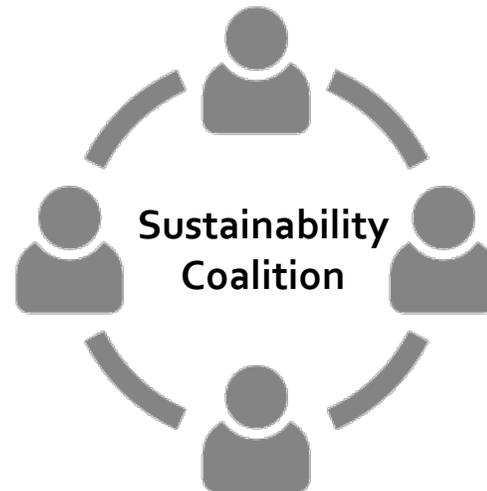


Community Engagement

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**



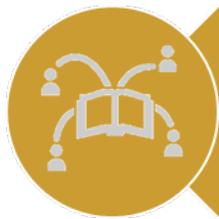
Public private partnership – Sustainability Council is formally adopted by the city



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

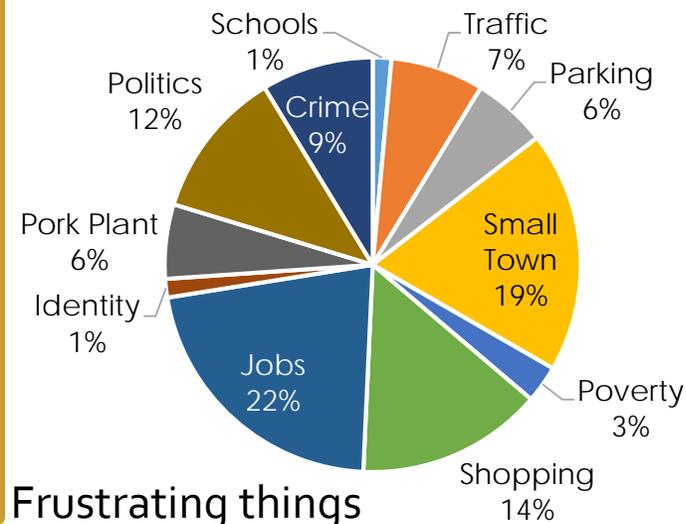
9.3% Mason City minority population

18.9% District minority enrollment



Diversity

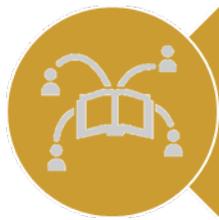
Increase diverse representation in business and community leadership



Frustrating things

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

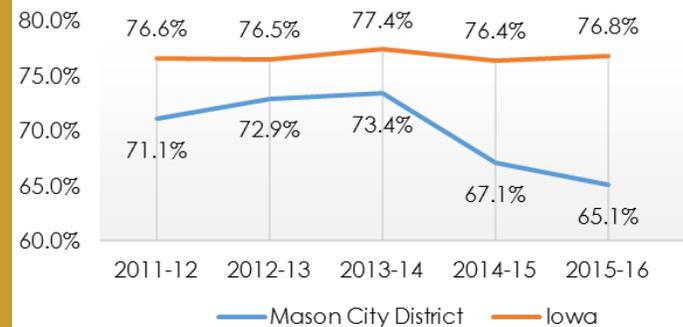


Education

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

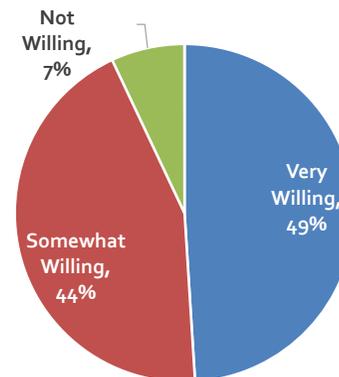
The poverty rate is **3% higher** than the statewide average



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

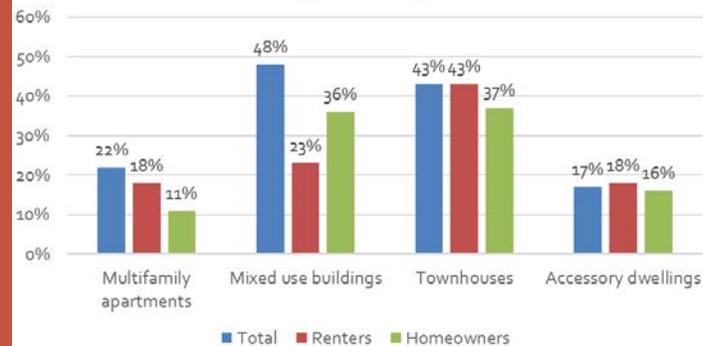
- Need for short term, high quality rental options
- Childcare waiting lists



Opportunities for Young Professionals

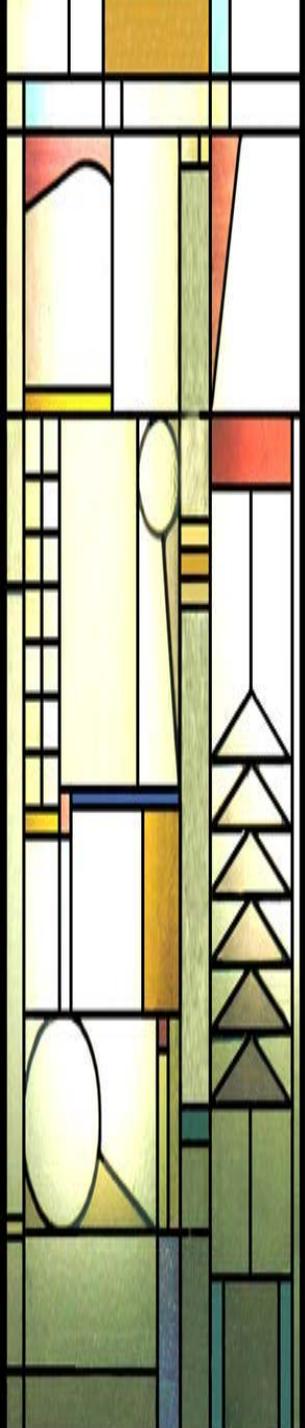
Attract and keep young professionals

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