



**Community Conversations for a New Winona**

# **=COMMUNITY REPORT=**

**Presented September 26, 2016**

**Winona County History Center**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document represents a year of effort by Engage Winona, a small group of Winona volunteer community leaders and residents, **to learn what a representative cross-section of community members wanted as a desirable future for Winona.** We led nearly 20 targeted group conversations and a daylong public event this spring, bringing together hundreds of residents in dialogue about Winona's future. Collectively, the events provided more than 4,500 unique responses to three open-ended questions, speaking to needs, hopes and dreams on a variety of issues, ranging from transportation to education, from downtown to the bluffs.

The responses were sorted into twenty primary categories. In each category there's a definition and brief analysis, a rounded number of responses, and descriptions of what works in our community, what our community could do better, and what projects would be of value to our future.

The areas of focus most frequently identified by the community were LOCAL ECONOMY, RECREATION, DOWNTOWN AND RIVERFRONT, and TRANSPORTATION, each receiving 450 mentions or more. Topics receiving between 200 and 250 mentions included HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES, INCLUSIVITY, POTENTIAL, NATURAL BEAUTY, and COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. Topics receiving between 100 and 199 mentions included SOCIAL CONNECTIONS, OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES, ARTS, FAMILY, K-12 EDUCATION, SIZE, HIGHER EDUCATION, and PRIDE. Other topics receiving mentions included WELLBEING, HERITAGE, and SAFETY. Within each of these categories, community strengths and weaknesses were identified, and ideas for potential projects were shared. We hope that community members will use these results as a starting point to create a common vision for Winona's future and a list of priorities that moves Winona in that direction.

**A key part of this work includes Winona's statements of values** – a synthesis of residents said were their top values, ethics and beliefs related to the community. You'll find that statement just below this summary. We invite you, as a community leader, company, or organization, or as someone simply interested in improving Winona, to in some way formally adopt the statements. We suggest that they become a part of your strategic planning, codes of conduct, decision-making, charitable giving plans, employee community outreach and support, and very ways of conducting your daily business both within the Winona community and across the world.

You'll agree strongly with some of what's contained in this report, disagree with other parts, notice that some of what was said is already happening, and notice other suggested initiatives that do not yet exist – and which you might be in the perfect position to lead. You're looking at a synthesis of what a true representative cross-section of the community had to say about Winona's future. We believe that their words, and Engage Winona's work, is vital to your future planning and success whether you're an organizational leader, community volunteer, or simply interested in making Winona a better place tomorrow than it is today.

We invite you to spend time with this report, and welcome any feedback at [engagewinona@gmail.com](mailto:engagewinona@gmail.com). We're particularly interested in hearing from those who incorporate these findings into strategic planning, projects, leadership initiatives, volunteer work, or in other ways across the Winona community.

*Mollie Sheehan and Brian Voerding, project leaders, on behalf of Engage Winona*

# STATEMENT OF VALUES

During Engage Winona's work, attendees spoke about needs, hopes and dreams on a variety of issues, ranging from transportation to education, from downtown to the bluffs. Attendees were rich and poor, longtime residents and newcomers, black and white, men and women, and of ages ranging from teenagers to octogenarians.

What residents had to say spoke strongly to the themes and issues both responsible for and standing in the way of our city's vitality, both today and in the future. Just as importantly, their words laid the groundwork for the way Winona residents want their companies, organizations and institutions, and even their neighbors to engage with them collaboratively to plan the community's future together.

- **WE BELIEVE** Engage Winona voices speak clearly to what Winona is, and what it strives to be
- **WE VALUE** their diverse contributions to how to improve our already vibrant community
- **WE CREATE** by giving their words a voice, presence, reach and power in your hands

We invite you, as a community leader, company, or organization, or even just someone interested in improving Winona, to in some way formally adopt the below statements. We suggest that they become a part of your strategic planning, codes of conduct, decision-making, charitable giving plans, employee community outreach and support, and very ways of conducting your daily business both within the Winona community and across the world.

# WE BELIEVE

(What we **preserve**, who we are as **people**)

**We believe** in people who fully commit to Winona, both homegrown and new arrivers, by choosing to live and work here, choosing to be inclusive to all beliefs and perspectives, and choosing to welcome all voices in discussing important issues

**We believe** that change is necessary for Winona to continue to grow and thrive

**We believe** in the value Winona's natural landscapes provide, for beauty and recreation, and believe in protecting those landscapes for generations to come

**We believe** Winona is a strong place to build and raise a family, rich with educational opportunities and activities to support growing children and growing families

**We believe** in Winona's ability to cultivate and sustain companies of all sizes, particularly those grown and driven by entrepreneurial spirit, and believe that strong companies make strong communities

**We believe** that people of all ages, status and privilege, children to retirees, interns to CEOs, are respectful, accessible, and welcoming, and keep open doors to new people and new ideas

**We believe** in lifelong learning, that we are never done growing, both individually and more fully into our communities, and that it is up to us to give back the unique skills we learn

**We believe** that teenagers deserve a safe place and supportive infrastructure, and should be provided with all necessary resources to thrive

**We believe** Winona needs to celebrate and appreciate what it has, and to be its own cheerleader

**We believe** our community works best when public projects and initiatives give all residents a voice

# WE VALUE

(What we **support**, who we are as a **community**)

**We value** Winona's beauty – the lakes, the river, the bluffs – and wildlife, its ability to inspire, Winona's natural resources and ecological diversity and how they provide an abundance of outdoor recreation

**We value** safety for ourselves, our children, and our families, where we can act freely and respectfully without fear

**We value** the diversity of educational offerings from preschool through higher education, the commitment to educating our community's children to serve the modern workforce, institutions' connections and contributions to the larger community, and their new perspectives and fresh ideas

**We value** Winona's size, not too big and not too small, its uniqueness and accessibility, the feel of a small town with lots going on, our ability to quickly bring all parties together to create change

**We value** Winona's history and heritage, and believe it should be used as a tool and not a wall when discussing community change

**We value** wellness and lifelong education, and providing affordable, accessible resources to all

**We value** responsible, responsive elected officials and government that invest deeply in our community through thoughtful, transparent decision-making

**We value** a strong, vibrant downtown that draws residents and tourists, that invests in local businesses, that has strong leadership and vision

**We value** our basic infrastructure, our sidewalks, roads and bridges, having a city that is easy to bike or walk, and the infrastructure that makes it enjoyable and safe

**We value** our nonprofit community and all of the value the organizations bring, especially those in social services, those that provide diverse, accessible opportunities for all, and our locally owned and operated healthcare organization

# WE CREATE

(What we **build and invest in**, where we go together as **people and community**)

**We create** a social infrastructure and culture of welcoming that provides opportunities for all residents, enabling them to feel successful and proud as individuals, families, and community members, including opportunities for restorative justice and rehabilitation

**We create** transparent, proactive plans for public change that involves and invites all voices for input and uses visions that are inclusive, forward-thinking, and comprehensive, instead of singular goals

**We create** collaborative, outward-facing companies and organizations that collaborate rather than compete, and seek to serve the community through knowledge sharing and creative partnerships

**We create** continued growth and investment in arts and culture that provide a diverse range of expressions that entertain, inspire, and challenge, and contribute directly to our economic growth

**We create** an abundance of opportunities through shared vision and planning, by embracing new ideas, by not letting fear of change get in the way, by inviting our neighbors, co-workers, friends, family and strangers to connect and build ideas together

**We create** investments in tomorrow's leaders, by educating them, hiring, developing and promoting them, and ensuring they're surrounded by the infrastructure (housing, recreation, social opportunities, and more) to keep them here and become the entrepreneurs who will build Winona's future

**We create** re-invention, the ability to try or to build something new, personally, professionally, and in community, a community that values the process of change

**We create** an atmosphere of community engagement where people show up, speak honestly, respond respectfully, listen for understanding, seek shared meaning, and embrace collaboration and compromise

**We create** public spaces that are inviting, engaging, and accessible to all, providing both quiet places of reflection and opportunities to engage in arts, culture and other activities

# THE THEMES



# LOCAL ECONOMY (515)

## DEFINITION

- Presence of companies of all sizes, in a diversity of industries
- Presence of and support of locally owned businesses, small to large
- Housing
- Focus on, and existing challenges for, entrepreneurship and innovative thinking
- Cost of living (wages, cost of goods, etc.)
- Focus on young professionals and families (twenty-, thirty-somethings) and availability of opportunities, both professional and personal
- The support of the local food industry and infrastructure (area farms, co-op, farmers markets)

## ANALYSIS

Diversity of industry and company size is welcomed.

Most prevalent concern by far is attracting and retaining the young professional age group, with issues tied to wages, promotion opportunities, housing, and recreation. A similarly concern is the future of entrepreneurship: Respondents say what was once a vital part of the community has faded, with few opportunities or resources available today.

## WHAT WORKS

- Locally grown companies that continue to be successful
- Major companies that choose to stay and grow here
- Lots of uniquely local businesses with good brands and reputations
- Support of local food economy, from farmers market to area producers, is strong
- Affordable place to live, either individually or as a family
- Diversity of industry keeps Winona stable

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Tough housing market across the board, but especially for young professionals and young families
- Affordable rentals, both houses and apartments – college-level quality, and hardly anything else
- A lot of entry-level and higher-level jobs, but nothing in between – can start or end career here, but have to go elsewhere for promotion and professional development
- Few opportunities for the creative class to find full-time employment, grow professionally
- Few resources or support systems that foster entrepreneurship and encourage people with big ideas to strike out on their own, try something new
- Difficult to keep students after college (or high-school) graduation
- Higher minimum wages across all industries, particularly for entry-level and mid-level jobs
- Inability to “create your own job” in Winona, either within companies or on your own
- Some companies are good at welcoming workers with special needs, ranging from disabilities to past drug convictions, while others are not – not enough consistency
- More consistent local, small retail business support – some do well while others really struggle

## TOP PROJECTS

## ENGAGE WINONA COMMUNITY REPORT

- Young Professional incubator – a space and programming that provides professional training and resources, development opportunities, entrepreneurship training, direct connections to local companies, and resources to not just attract but keep YPs in town
- Entrepreneur hub – A program or space (or both) that serves as a central resource for residents with ideas looking to start businesses, companies, or products, or grow and expand small organizations. Programs would include Winona’s version of “Shark Tank,” other opportunities.
- Programs that tie kids directly into career opportunities at a young age, moving them through middle school, high school, and college on a cohesive path supported by Winona’s education institutions
- Organization that supports, promotes and provides resources for home businesses, one-person operations, etc., in part focused on the creative class (artists, makers, inventors, designers, etc.)

# RECREATION (475)

## DEFINITION

- Broadly defined as activities to do in one's spare time – includes food, nightlife, weekend activities, etc.
- Includes individual pursuits, or interest in meeting people and engaging with community
- Focused on positive growth and availability in the last 10-15 years
- Reflects, but not include, separate categories of arts or outdoor activities
- Focused on specific, concrete events, businesses and organizations, not general values
- Equally focused on activities for residents and tourists

## ANALYSIS

Respondents focused on change, new projects and ideas in this category, speaking little about what works or what is already valued. It's worth pointing out this doesn't mean Winona lacks recreation opportunities, or that the responses minimize what Winona has to offer. Recreation was a strong and consistent focus for respondents, especially given that questions focused on what they would want to add or change. Responses largely focused on two things: Diversity and availability of restaurants, and lack of a strong community center.

## WHAT WORKS

- A ton of stuff going on – something to do practically every night
- Lots of free and affordable events
- Good focus on families with younger children
- Growth of activities has been big and positive over last 10 years

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- No cohesive promotion; everyone puts the word out differently; no one place to go to learn about everything
- Stronger diversity of restaurants, both local and fast-casual chains (Chipotle was a top response), as well as ethnic
- Unique retail shops – good presence, but need more (or better promotion and awareness)
- Not a lot of activities for older kids and teens
- Alcohol-free activities
- Weekend programming at colleges open to and promoted to the public
- Not enough events that really cater to a wide, diverse group of community members
- A strong mall featuring blend of local and national shops – why all the strip malls all over?
- Residents seem unwilling to go outside comfort zone and participate in new activities

## TOP PROJECTS

- One-stop-shop event promotion that hits multiple channels (social, online, print, flyers)
- Community center (generally understood to be a gathering and social place for people of all ages)
- Roller rink
- Teen center
- Dog park (also a top project in outdoor activities)
- Coordinated community access to all or some of the recreational facilities that school and universities have – all these great amenities that could get wider use

# DOWNTOWN, RIVERFRONT (450)

## DEFINITION

- Number of and diversity of businesses
- Infrastructure, from buildings to parking
- Aesthetics, including boulevards, cleanliness, and more
- Attractiveness of downtown to both residents and tourists
- Development of and use and perception of Levee Park
- Accessibility and use of public parts of the riverfront

## ANALYSIS

There were no positive responses related to downtown as a whole, though a new, strategically planned, vibrant downtown was universally supported. Respondents noted plenty of individual bright spots, particularly with restaurants and retail businesses locating downtown. Very few responses suggested specific projects, which represents an opportunity – folks are looking for overall improvements, not just one project. Respondents overwhelmingly continue to value downtown, and see its success as crucial to the community’s future. The one consistent and overriding theme was that downtown lacks strong vision, collective leadership, and focused effort on improvement. Some respondents expressed strong desire to emulate other cities (Red Wing, Decorah, etc.), while others said Winona is much better served by creating its own vision.

## WHAT WORKS

- Several bright spots in terms of unique, local businesses
- Family-friendly events that drive foot traffic (Farmers Market, Touch a Truck)
- Preservation of notable historic buildings (Latsch building)
- City of Winona’s plan for and revitalization of Levee Park
- Individual local businesses, both retail and restaurants, continuing to commit to downtown

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Lack of vision for infrastructure, planning, particularly related to residential
- Historic vs. old: Need strong, clear definition of what’s worth saving, what should be torn down; too many old buildings falling down
- Coordinated, consistent hours among businesses
- No promotional vehicle for downtown – details on what every store offers, regular deals and coupons to drive traffic, more coordinated events (like Sweet Stroll)
- Coordinated beautification campaign, from storefronts to sidewalks
- Stronger connection between downtown, riverfront
- More green space, pedestrian-friendly areas
- Visionary, dedicated leadership that doesn’t just plan, but get things done
- A brand that inspires, welcomes, drives change
- Hold building owners more accountable for disrepair, as well as help them redevelop

## TOP PROJECTS

- ½ cent sales tax dedicated to downtown improvements

## ENGAGE WINONA COMMUNITY REPORT

- Downtown leadership council
- City-backed and other incentives to encourage businesses to locate downtown
- One-stop-shop for resources for prospective downtown business owners
- Cohesive brand to sell to residents and tourists
- Boutique hotel
- Central parking ramp, get rid of some parking lots

# TRANSPORTATION (450)

## DEFINITION

- Ability for people (and to a minor degree, goods) to get around town efficiently for work and recreation
- Transportation in and out of town (train, access to airports, etc.)
- Related to size, in terms of ability to walk and bike across town
- Focus on basic infrastructure, including sidewalks (especially downtown), stop lights, stop signs, and others
- Parking

## ANALYSIS

Much like recreation, respondents focused on change, new projects and ideas in this category, speaking little about what works or what is already valued. Much more so than many other categories, solutions to the critiques and opportunities offered will rely on a complicated combination of local, regional, state and federal stakeholders (and funding), meaning any projects will likely move much more slowly. That said, there are projects of local interest that could be addressed with renewed attention, particularly related to snow removal and general pedestrian accessibility and comfort.

## WHAT WORKS

- Focus on pedestrians, especially while crossing streets – unique to Winona
- City's size means it's easy to walk and bike across town
- Sidewalks, streets generally in good condition
- Bus service in a city Winona's size is appreciated

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Train delays
- Uncontrolled intersections
- Truck routes through city – people are courteous, but way too many trucks
- Taxi service reliability
- Hwy. 61 is a nightmare for pedestrians
- Bus service is nice to have for city's size, but need more stops, longer hours, and more convenient pick-up/drop-off locations
- Lighting on main streets, especially Broadway, is poor – creates danger for pedestrians
- Railroad safety – recent deaths, combined with observed behavior of people trying to beat trains on foot or in cars, walking on tracks, etc.
- Traffic lights at main intersections move too fast from green to red
- Bike paths connected both through city and into the county
- High-speed rail

## TOP PROJECTS

- Move some bus route drop-off locations to be more convenient
- Sidewalks and curbs, especially downtown, cleared of snow expediently
- Better, more cohesive plans for pedestrian safety at intersections – the flashing signs, walk buttons, no right turns on red, flags to indicate people crossing, etc.

## ENGAGE WINONA COMMUNITY REPORT

- Dementia-friendly community signage and infrastructure
- Free buses to Winona Health and back
- Dedicated bike lanes
- Pedestrian infrastructure in east-end industrial park –sidewalks, painted crossings, etc.
- Angled parking on Main Street isn't working
- Walkways over Hwy. 61 at key intersections – Mankato, Hwy. 14, near Hy-Vee
- East-end overpass (Louisa, Mankato)
- More accessibility for the disabled – level sidewalks, less steep curb cuts, benches in large stores to sit and rest on,
- Use WSU buses for rest of community during the summer

# HEALTHCARE, SOCIAL SERVICES (250)

## DEFINITION

- The presence of and range of traditional healthcare services (Winona Health, other providers)
- Social-service agencies (Hiawatha Valley, ORC, DAC, HCO, etc.)
- County/government health and human services
- Alternative programs like Winona County Drug Court
- Natural and alternative healthcare and healing

## ANALYSIS

Winona is deeply appreciative of having a local healthcare facility that provides for a range of needs. Respondents also spoke favorably of the variety and accessibility of social services and agencies. The biggest critique and demand for change was an increase in providing mental-health resources at all levels, from counseling to in-patient/long-term care options. Some respondents also said that once they've been made aware of Winona's resources they're appreciative, but struggled to discover an easy way to find the resources.

## WHAT WORKS

- Proximity to quality services in many specialties
- Locally owned healthcare facility
- Number of social services available, accessible
- Responsive, community-oriented nonprofits (many mentioned by name, including HCO, Women's Resource Center, Winona Volunteer Services)
- People-centered care, caring for individual needs (Drug Court, etc.)
- Increased attention on drug and alcohol addiction resources

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Mental-health resources and access to care – (lack of psychologist/psychiatrists, suicide prevention resources, presence of stigma, general understanding, etc.)
- Lack of residential facilities, housing to care for a wide variety of needs (drug addiction, mental health, homeless, domestic abuse shelter, etc.)
- Expanded focus on restorative justice – good opportunities, but scattered and not well-known
- Lack of opportunities, resources for those in poverty, especially working poor

## TOP PROJECTS

- Mental health 24/7 helpline and mobile unit
- Organization dedicated to suicide prevention and resources
- Community free clinic
- Hub for people with disabilities to learn about all community resources, opportunities
- Integrate holistic healing into traditional healthcare channels



# INCLUSIVITY (250)

## DEFINITION

- People’s ability to get along with other people of all ages, colors, ethnicities, religious beliefs, etc.
- Basic friendliness among those who don’t understand each other well
- Presence of opportunities for diverse populations, both professional and personal
- Degree to which Winona is a welcoming community
- Presence of diversity of lived experiences (from the bluffs to the boathouses)
- Ability to accept, promote, and engage with a wide range of perspectives

## ANALYSIS

This category is, in a word, complicated. Well-educated diverse populations, especially with university connections, assimilate easiest. Those who arrive without resources struggle much more. Winona tries hard and genuinely cares deeply about inclusiveness, though there are pockets of resistance. Residents are generally well-intentioned, but few know how to truly engage with diverse communities. This is not a judgment, respondents say, simply an opportunity to educate. Some residents operate out of fear, while others simply ignore growing diversity because they’re not sure how to respond or connect. As one respondent put it: “We don’t try to be exclusive, but we don’t know how to be inclusive.”

## WHAT WORKS

- Winona is generally welcoming and supportive of diverse populations
- Decent understanding of the levels of diversity (not just race and ethnicity, but disabilities, age, income, etc.)
- High prominence and awareness of groups and events that celebrate diversity and promote diverse viewpoints (Project FINE, Great Dakota Gathering, Human Rights Commission, FORTITUDE, etc.), especially compared to similar-sized communities
- Winona isn’t that diverse, but it is headed in the right direction
- Despite conflict, people come together to serve clear needs (example of Islamic Center fire)

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Minorities are geographically isolated (Maplewood, East Belleview)
- Being welcoming and inclusive is a city-wide effort, but too many put the work on too few
- Big disconnect, isolation between urban and rural residents – that’s diversity no one talks about
- Huge disparity between rich, poor
- More events, festivals that promote the richness of diversity, not a single aspect
- No single plan for how Winona welcomes diverse people
- Accessible, free cultural competency and sensitivity training opportunities (or better promotion of what exists)
- Diverse groups welcome Winonans (events, outreach, etc.) but why isn’t it the other way around? It’s Winona’s responsibility to roll out the red carpet to diverse groups

## TOP PROJECTS

- Cultural competency training for all government staff, and offered to the larger community
- Guidebook or manual for how to embrace and understand cultural differences
- Clear, community-wide understanding of how diversity and inclusiveness is defined
- More storytelling; knowing individuals’ backgrounds, through media or events featuring them

# POTENTIAL (250)

## DEFINITION

- Winona’s ability to remake itself, become something new
- Focus on collaboration and synergy, not silos and competition
- The ability to make change quickly and sustainably, given Winona’s size
- Includes valuing people moving into town (“new blood,” “outsiders,” etc.) and getting engaged
- Includes relative ability of residents to recognize and support new things and new ideas

## ANALYSIS

Respondents say Winona has huge potential in a variety of areas, some of which are being capitalized on, others that are not being pursued, either because of resistance or a lack of vision and organization. The ability to do work or launch new ideas quickly is valued, as is the accessibility of community leaders and partners to discuss and consider change. The largest critique surrounds Winona’s brand: Winona appears to be many things, but is missing the so-called “elevator pitch” – Can you sell the best values of the town in 30 seconds? This category generally does not refer to specific projects, except in one case: The overwhelming focus on and desire to keep local college graduates in town, and attract 20- and 30-somethings to town and keep them here.

A crucial part of this category is the **perception** that Winona newcomers drive all the change and fresh ideas, while lifelong residents resist or fight those changes. Respondents say this perception is myth and reality at once, and the fact that it’s not better understood or addressed is a major roadblock to realizing potential.

## WHAT WORKS

- Winona has much higher ceiling than other cities its size, in terms of natural beauty, community capacity, talent and other factors
- Thin layers of formal channels to get something approved – ‘not a lot of bureaucracy’
- Investment to launch a new idea or business is low
- Large population of transplants, including in leadership positions, who bring in new energy and ideas and work hard to improve the whole community
- Landlocked reality can lead to creative use of space

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- What’s Winona’s identity? What’s Winona’s brand? What’s Winona’s vision? What’s Winona’s master plan?
- Big problem to be solved in keeping young professionals, people ages 25-39 in town
- The ‘Two Winonas problem’ – one group pushes for change, the other group pushes back hard
- We need to invest in our potential, not just talk about it; progressive in our ideas, but not executing them
- Winona struggles to dream big, to plan big

## TOP PROJECTS

- None offered. Category refers more to how Winona approaches, visions, and agrees or comes into conflict about its future, not how it builds it. Projects related to this category are broadly represented in all other categories.

# NATURAL BEAUTY (240)

## DEFINITION

- Winona’s natural resources, from the bluffs to the river

## ANALYSIS

Responses focused almost exclusively not just on appreciation of Winona’s resources, but explicitly protecting them. Reasons ranged widely, from supporting future generations, to preserving tourism opportunities, to ensuring companies can operate sustainably. Resource protection is a common (and conflicted) narrative in Winona, but it’s worth noting that respondents spoke to protection strongly and consistently across all demographics.

## WHAT WORKS

- Incredible diversity of unparalleled beauty
- The bluffs, rivers, lakes are all unique
- Huge attraction for both tourists and potential residents – biggest thing we have to market is what we don’t have to pay for
- Strong, organized entities that support environmental stewardship and protection and have voice and power
- City’s work to craft strong ordinances, from building on the blufftops to slope restrictions

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- More progressive policies, approach to environmental protection
- Better coordination, planning among businesses to promote green-friendly behaviors
- Ban frac sand mining
- Stronger, more cohesive programming around environmental issues – many things happening independently, but seem unfocused and aren’t always good at promoting or organizing
- Too little focus on a clean, preserved Mississippi

## TOP PROJECTS

- More support, funding for existing groups (Healthy Lake Winona, Winona Area Pollinators, others were mentioned)
- More promotion for organizations that promote, educate on renewable energy
- Citizen group that provides input on design, improvements to public green spaces (could be like a park/rec advisory board)
- A citywide board/council (non-governmental) dedicated to advocating for and promoting specific practices, events and organizations

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (230)

## DEFINITION

- Ability for people to come together in harmony or conflict to discuss pressing issues
- Accessibility of volunteer groups, organizations
- Ability of and interest of people to advocate for change
- Ability for groups to agree on and execute change
- Philanthropy, both individual and company
- Presence of and quality of leadership, both within official positions (government, recognized public positions) and community and volunteer organizations.

## ANALYSIS

Winona values the ability to quickly connect into existing groups or form new groups. Winona also values the ability to get things done by bringing all needed stakeholders to the table quickly, unlike in larger cities. Biggest challenge is that the “usual suspects” make all the big decision without consulting new and diverse voices. Younger voices needed in government. There’s no cohesive plan for community engagement, just every organization or group appearing to do its own thing, with little collaboration.

## WHAT WORKS

- Big enough to do something, small enough to have a voice
- More and more people invested in city’s future
- Winona beginning to want to talk about difficult issues
- Many local companies are very good at giving back generously and consistently
- Easy to get involved in wherever your passion is – something for everyone
- Definite sense of community engagement, caring
- Comes together when it counts
- Community leaders (government, business, nonprofit, etc.) are accessible, open
- Can have an idea, and in just days have enough people at the table to make it happen
- Many people care deeply about changing things – active resistance to the status quo

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- More voices at the table, not the usual suspects making decisions
- Stronger, proactive communication about projects that affect the public
- More cohesive, strategic vision at the city level
- Too much talking and studying, too little action
- Where’s the message that we’re all in this together?
- Philanthropy seems fractured, without a larger vision – people giving to whatever they’re personally invested in, without understanding Winona’s larger needs
- Leaders often seem overworked and overwhelmed, take on projects that benefit single organizations without surveying the larger needs
- Need better understanding of the community’s assets and capacity
- Younger leadership
- Visionary leaders with big ideas – think differently

## ENGAGE WINONA COMMUNITY REPORT

- Poor understanding of the larger community good – what are our values? Where are we going together?

### TOP PROJECTS

- Regular community conversations around big issues
- Community leadership development
- Training, resources for small nonprofits, board members, volunteers looking to grow
- Strategic planning for where Winona's going, and how everyone can help in their own ways
- Community grant-writing office

# SOCIAL CONNECTIONS (200)

## DEFINITION

- Ability to make, build and keep satisfying relationships and social circles, both personally and professionally
- A sense of overall belonging related to community, workplace, neighborhood and others
- The connections between and among community organizations and institutions
- Includes relationships to churches and social institutions
- Includes to some degree family, and the pull family creates to stay in the community
- Includes concept of social mobility, the ability to gain experience, community leadership roles, professional promotions, and other successes through personal relationships

## ANALYSIS

Winona’s social connections provide both opportunities and challenges. The community is welcoming and easy to build connections in, respondents said, but is often insular, making it easy to connect but hard to get or stay close. Respondents were satisfied with their ability to connect as long as they were willing and able to work at it. Challenges exist because of a perceived silo mentality – people within organizations, as well as people within established friend and social groups, talking among themselves, but not often enough to each other. Respondents appreciate that Winona is generally quite friendly, and appreciate the ability for “regular people” to easily access community leaders.

This category is notably different than the **community engagement** category, because it refers to people coming together to be together, or to develop personally, instead of seeking to accomplish something together for a specific cause. It is also similar to the **inclusive** category, but focused on individual connections, rather than acceptance of identified groups or populations.

## WHAT WORKS

- Intimacy of town means stronger connections
- Many people are local or have strong family ties
- Neighbors seem to care and look out for each other
- People are accountable for decisions and actions in places where everyone knows each other
- Great value in going places and seeing people you know by face and name
- People are inviting, engaging, “insanely” nice
- Authority figures, community leaders are very accessible
- Easy to see how everything is connected, compared to a bigger city
- Conflict among/between groups, institutions is never so big they can’t work together

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Blue-collar vs. “the university” population – sometimes feels like two different towns together
- Some communities seem very isolated from the larger city (especially churches)
- Lack of young professional population makes it hard for twenty-, thirty-somethings to connect
- Better engagement at neighborhood level – block parties, other events for neighbors to really get to know each other
- Hard to know where to start as a newcomer; so many groups are already formed

**TOP PROJECTS**

- Winona Welcoming Committee – some kind of formalized structure that provides resources, opportunities to new residents and families about places to connect, people to meet with
- Family dinners program – families invite other families they don't know to dinner
- Stronger presence of block parties – every neighborhood needs one
- Invest In Winona – idea to convince newcomers to live, work, and engage in the community, rather than commuting
- Stronger neighborhood identities

# OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES (175)

## DEFINITION

- Active outdoor activities in all forms (hiking, biking, running, canoeing, etc.)
- Recreational activities done outdoors (walking, fishing, hunting, etc.)
- Presence of affordable, approachable activities for beginners and competitors alike
- City park and recreation department programming and infrastructure

## ANALYSIS

Overwhelmingly positive outlook on the variety and number of opportunities year-round for outdoor activities. Respondents are pleased with the renewed attention on a number of things, from mountain biking to climbing. Respondents also pleased with city's park and recreation programming and quality of outdoor public spaces. Unlike in many other categories, critiques and challenges focused largely not on vision, but on specific projects.

## WHAT WORKS

- Wide variety of activities, both seasonal and year-round – hiking, biking, canoeing/kayaking, Frisbee golf, fishing, climbing, sledding, cross-country skiing
- Accessibility – hardly have to travel past our backyard, and many places are somewhat handicapped accessible
- Winona's Park and Recreation department – lots of different amenities and programs, all affordable or free
- Great balance of activities for beginners to experts (from 5K walk/runs to Trinoona)
- Real gems in terms of infrastructure (Lake Park bike path at the top)

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- More programming for kids of all ages, as well as adults (especially beginners looking to hike, canoe, etc.), as well as organized group events
- Winona is so close to branding itself for outdoor activities the way it's been recognized for arts – what's preventing it, and what is Winona's long-term vision and plan?
- Many people aren't sure how to get started on an activity, and don't know where to turn
- Stronger, more regular programming in schools that get kids connected with Winona's nature

## TOP PROJECTS

- Dog park (publicly funded)
- Dedicated bike lanes
- Connected bike and hiking trails
- One-stop-shop to get maps, tips and advice for all outdoor activities, from biking through the county to hiking near Garvin, to canoeing the backwaters
- Collaborative master plan for outdoor recreation, just like the city does comprehensive planning – build on existing strong vision for outdoors to take Winona to the next level
- Latsch Beach overhaul



# ARTS (160)

## DEFINITION

- The presence of and support of the arts in all forms.

## ANALYSIS

Responses were overwhelmingly positive. The arts are vital to Winona, and need to be encouraged to continue to grow. The arts are increasingly part of Winona’s unique brand and making the city, along with outdoor activities, a tourist destination. Future work includes investment in bricks-and-mortar spaces (either a one-stop-shop arts center, or individual locations), as well as sustainable financial support from a larger percentage of the community. The biggest challenge is the lack of cohesive organization among arts organizations of all sizes, or the lack of an umbrella organization to serve, advocate for, and possibly even draw funding to support all organizations.

## WHAT WORKS

- Exploded over the last decade, and continuing to grow
- Becoming a cornerstone to Winona’s brand
- Presence of festivals, including Great River Shakespeare Festival, Frozen River Film Festival, Mid West Music Fest, Boats and Bluegrass, rivals much larger cities
- Winona becoming a true destination for arts and culture, drawing tourists and attracting potential residents
- High-quality, professional organizations and institutions – bar is set high
- Arts community is collaborative; there’s space for many different forms of expression

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- More awareness of arts organizations and artists of all sizes and mediums – 10 percent get 90 percent of the attention
- Stronger, more cohesive promotion of arts in all forms – everyone does their own thing
- Hard to find sustainable financial support – too many people think ticket sales pay the bills
- Colleges have exceptional arts programming, free or affordable – better promotion and understanding of college programs as true public events
- Attendance and support from more, and more diverse, locals
- Too much focus on festivals, not enough attention on single events
- Need for an arts district (downtown)

## TOP PROJECTS

- Active, centrally located performing arts center
- A single booster organization that serves to promote local art in all forms, organize events, raise money for individual projects and organizations, could even draw funding and give grants to events and artists
- Outdoor performance space (Levee Park)
- A place to create and display public art – anything from a graffiti wall to a sculpture garden

# K-12 EDUCATION (125)

## DEFINITION

- The diverse set of schools that serve pre-kindergarten to high-school seniors in Winona and the surrounding area.

## ANALYSIS

Schools are crucial to Winona’s future, not only to families with children but to respondents across the demographic spectrum. Winona is deeply appreciative of the diversity of school options and sizes, and the accessibility the schools provide. The challenge to that diversity means lots of options combined with fewer kids to go around; many respondents worry about the future of having so many competing options.

## WHAT WORKS

- Diversity of choices (public, private, religious, charter)
- Opportunities for parents to engage in children’s education and in schools
- WAPS’ financial health, ability to educate is crucial to Winona’s future
- WAPS specialized elementary schools (STEM, SLIP)
- Focus on early education

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- All schools need to collaborate better and compete less
- Stronger mental-health programs and resources at all levels
- Stronger connections to career-based programming through community partnerships, mentoring
- Accessibility to activities, from arts to sports, increasingly driven by ability to afford them — all activities should be subsidized or free
- Minority graduation rates at WAPS

## TOP PROJECTS

- Future of WAPS facilities (**Note:** a number of responses focused on this issue with no clear consensus, other than agreement that a decision needs to be made one way or the other)
- A leadership council of administrators from all schools, where they can share information, learn more about each other’s work, brainstorm collaborations, and trade best practices

# FAMILY (125)

## DEFINITION

- All aspects of raising a family that don't include education
- Focus on teenager activities and resources
- Desire for family-friendly activities for kids of all ages
- The pull of family to stay located in Winona
- Mentoring youth

## ANALYSIS

Positive responses largely focus on values. Critiques focus on activities. Biggest need and challenge revolves around resources related to teenagers: Events, mental-health support, healthy social activities, opportunities to learn about careers, and more.

## WHAT WORKS

- Strong quality of life – affordable, safe
- Variety of educational opportunities
- Strong early-childhood programming and outreach
- Affordability of community activities
- Lots of school-based activities, from arts to sports
- Quality of life allows work, family, and home to be all located in Winona

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Seems like most family-friendly events are focused on younger kids (toddlers to age 8-10)
- More affordable childcare, more options (manufacturing workers in particular struggle to find childcare that matches shift times)
- More activities for pre-teens and teens
- More accessible (or just better advertised) active activities, including sports, outside of traditional school and competitive teams
- Teenagers more engaged in community work, from volunteering to having a seat at the table with organizations, government

## TOP PROJECTS

- A teen center
- An organization focused on providing teen-specific activities and opportunities
- Organization that provides one-stop-shop resources for teens (mental health, career planning, social activities, etc.)
- Outdoor activities for kids and families
- Multi-generational mentorship opportunities for kids and families
- Afterschool programs that include active programming, transportation

# SIZE (110)

## DEFINITION

- Perception of Winona being not too big, not too small
- Refers to both geographic and population size
- Ability to quickly understand Winona and learn what it has to offer
- Pace of life – not a single pace, but the ability to live either slow or fast in Winona
- Value of peace and quiet
- Relates in part to proximity to larger cities
- Includes ability to walk and bike, though both are addressed stronger in transportation category

## ANALYSIS

Respondents deeply appreciate the size of their community, because it gives them flexibility to live at their own pace, and easily find peace and quiet or active pursuits when they want them. They value having relatively easy opportunities to find opportunities to engage, whether personally or professionally. The only category where there aren't notable responses focused on improvement, meaning that not only do Winona residents accept the size of their community, they in many ways value it and seek to maintain what already exists.

## WHAT WORKS

- Small-town feel and vibe – unique identify, accessible
- Walkable and bikeable – important not just for recreation, but for economy
- Easy to get anywhere quickly, traffic is never bad; makes life very efficient
- Rarely have to wait in long lines anywhere
- Presence as regional center is important
- Location means Winona will never become a suburb of anywhere else
- Quiet places (lake, woods) easily accessible
- Location to large cities (Twin Cities, Madison, Chicago) is appealing

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Nothing of note. Size is what it is.

## TOP PROJECTS

- None. Projects related to size are represented in social connections, community engagement, heritage, and other categories.

# HIGHER EDUCATION (100)

## DEFINITION

- Presence of public, private and community colleges
- The ways colleges interact with and support the larger community
- The quality of the education, the vitality of the schools as economic institutions
- The character of the people, from the welcomed “new blood” to the “college kid problem”

## ANALYSIS

Winona deeply values all three schools and their commitment to both education and the community. Responses were largely positive, and focused on continued belief in all the schools as vital to the city’s future. A challenge continues to be conflict with college students in the core neighborhoods surrounding WSU. Another challenge is many were not aware of colleges’ work to connect with the larger community.

## WHAT WORKS

- Colleges are vital the community, from the ideas and talented diverse people they bring to town, to the events they host, to the jobs and boosts to the economy they provide (“Lose the colleges, lose the town”)
- College interns bring huge value to everyone from tiny nonprofits to big companies
- Not many places Winona’s size can boast about having a vibrant four-year public school, four-year private school, and community college all in the same city
- All Winona’s colleges work hard to be affordable and to recruit students from the local community

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Continuing conflict between bad-behaving students, neighbors
- More free events to connect the community to the colleges – not just arts and speakers, but picnics and parties
- Colleges need to more active promote their students’ work in the community, from internships to volunteering; people don’t always understand the impact
- More professional training, certification programs, and masters’ degrees to keep and retrain talented residents
- WSU proactively and publicly communicates facilities plans well in advance

## TOP PROJECTS

- Give students credits or incentives to integrate into the broader community, from volunteer service to just shopping at local businesses
- A one-stop-shop that connects students seeking internships or work with companies and organizations

# PRIDE (100)

## DEFINITION

- All responses along the lines of “I love Winona!”

## ANALYSIS

Category simply includes non-directive responses – no changes, projects, or any other suggestions offered – commenting on love for Winona. Worth noting as a separate category because of the volume of comments. Focused on wanting more residents to step back and appreciate what they have and what Winona has to offer. Critiques focused on residents taking time and responsibility to find community elements they love and then supporting them, both through patronage and promotion.

## WHAT WORKS

- A uniqueness that can't be found anywhere else in Minnesota, in the region
- People move here intentionally for quality of life
- The list of assets this community has is endless -education, culture, arts, nature, transportation
- Winona feels like home
- Full-service community

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Winona is awful at bragging about what it has – seems to always just wish it were better – celebrate what we have
- We often talk about the great things here, but how often do we as individuals support them?
- Pride in what we have can stand in the way of achieving what we want to become
- Stuck in old stories
- As one commenter said, when Winona works, it “has a river town mentality renewal and refreshing of spirit, like the moving river”

## TOP PROJECTS

- None. Also reflected in several other categories.

# WELLBEING (90)

## DEFINITION

- Physical, social and mental wellbeing outside of traditional healthcare structures
- Lifelong, adult learning
- Wellness activities (yoga, acupuncture, massage, etc.) and institutions that provide them
- Support for and understanding of wellness and healing programs
- Focused on support of community institutions including Winona YMCA, Winona Friendship Center, Live Well Winona, and many others

## ANALYSIS

In this category, the number of responses doesn't necessarily reflect the interest in wellbeing and lifelong learning, but rather that respondents are generally satisfied with the available options. The primary focus came in two categories: Support of wellness organizations, and the community's need to focus on opportunities for older adults as the population ages.

## WHAT WORKS

- Support of small providers who practice wellness, alternative medicine, yoga, etc.
- City is starting to see, appreciate value and needs of older adults
- Good affordable and free adult education opportunities (Community education, library, etc.)

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Promotion of and understanding of wellness organizations across the community
- Integrate community wellness opportunities within companies of all sizes – events taught on site, healthcare subsidies or payments to see community providers
- Not a lot of opportunities/events for multi-aged, multi-abled, people of all backgrounds to connect together
- Stronger, more connected services for seniors – through expanded Friendship Center or across the city

## TOP PROJECTS

- New YMCA, with more community-based programming and support
- Multi-generational mentorship programs – adult residents helping youth learn trades, hobbies, skills
- A community hub for small wellness nonprofits – all located in the same physical place, or all accessible through a single website, including resources and services offered
- Adult education events: we have all kinds of arts festivals – how about a science festival? Or learning festival?

# HERITAGE (85)

## DEFINITION

- Winona’s history and legacy, and wanting to preserve it
- Primarily relates to physical infrastructure (historic buildings, neighborhoods)
- Includes Winona’s social and community values

## ANALYSIS

Heritage generally refers to Winona’s values and beliefs that shape the way the community looks, acts and feels. The big conflict in this category are respondents who generally value the community as it is now (or was), and those frustrated by the belief that too much stands in the way of change.

## WHAT WORKS

- Makes Winona unique, and connects us to each other through shared understanding
- Heritage is marketable – historic downtown, homegrown companies
- Heritage defines a community’s values, like entrepreneurship (Fastenal), or protecting the land (John Latsch)
- Preservation and understanding of history ensures we don’t move too fast, or in the wrong direction

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Sense of resistance to anything new is overwhelming, too strong
- “Why fix it if it’s not broken?” or “First, do no harm” blocks change without first even investigating whether it’s good change
- Look for ways to say yes instead of no
- Attitude keeps talented people with big ideas from staying in Winona
- We can embrace change and our traditional values, but too often we see it as either/or, not both/and

## TOP PROJECTS

- A clear, proactive way of determining what parts of Winona are historic versus just old; a plan in place most everyone agrees on would benefit community projects and planning
- Category refers more to how Winona approaches, visions, and agrees or comes into conflict about its future, so other projects related to this category are represented in all other categories.



# SAFETY (80)

## DEFINITION

- Traditional safety, including presence of crime and law enforcement
- Neighbors and communities supporting and looking out for each other
- General perception of safety (walking down the street at night, going to a new neighborhoods)
- Includes pedestrian safety and other issues, but for more analysis, see transportation category

## ANALYSIS

Responses were overall positive, praising Winona as a safe community, especially from the perspective of families raising children. General responsiveness and accessibility of law enforcement was also praised. The number of responses in a category with fewer crossover responses than other categories indicate that safety isn't at the forefront of many respondents' minds, except to comment on individual situations. The largest subset concerned with policing and public safety were Hmong residents, who were both very pleased with the safety of the community, but reported negative interactions with and fear of law enforcement.

## WHAT WORKS

- Safe place for children, families
- Overall positive interactions with law enforcement
- Community watches over each other, neighbors helping neighbors
- Low levels of violent crime
- Feel safe at night in all neighborhoods

## WHAT CAN BE BETTER

- Police interaction with and perceived profiling among minorities (primarily Hmong, black)
- Bike patrol/community safety officers who teach proper biking behavior and point out violations
- Stronger training for police dealing with those who are mentally ill or addicted
- More regular foot patrols in college neighborhoods

## TOP PROJECTS

- Street signs in different languages (especially alternate-side parking signs)
- More regular opportunities for residents to interact with all law enforcement officers

# APPENDICES

# METHOD, QUESTIONS, CONVERSATIONS

## OUR MISSION

To learn what a representative cross-section of community members want as a desirable future for Winona.

Engage Winona's work consisted of holding conversations in two ways using the World Café format, which convenes people in small, rotating groups and uses open-ended questions to facilitate engagement:

- **Mobile cafés** brought together populations within specific, diverse communities, particularly those not well-represented in conversations at the community level about change
- Three large **world cafés**, open to the public, were held over the course of a single day

In each conversation, participants were asked a question, given twenty minutes to discuss, with the process then repeated for the other two questions. Facilitators trained by Engage Winona were present to take detailed notes, and to guide the conversation as needed. The three questions were prepared with consultation from the Blandin Foundation, as well as other resources. A fourth question was used only with high-school and college mobile cafés.

1. What is important to you about Winona and why do you care?
2. If you could improve one thing about our community, what would it be and why?
3. If success were guaranteed, what bold choices would you make for Winona's future?
4. (High-school and college groups): What would make you want to stay in Winona after graduation?

**During the conversations, conducted between March and April, with the daylong world café event April 19, Engage Winona collected more than 4,500 unique responses from more than 400 community members.**

## DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Engage Winona collected basic demographic data from nearly 400 people who completed surveys at our conversations; the response rate, compared against registration numbers, was better than 90 percent. **The intent was to determine whether we achieved our goal of connecting with a representative cross-section of community members, and the data show that we were successful.** The findings included:

- On average, respondent **has lived in Winona between 10-20 years**, with the most respondents having lived in Winona for more than 30 years; data is spread fairly widely across all five points, from 1-5 years to 30-plus years
- **Overwhelmingly not born in Winona**; twice as many non-natives than natives
- **Average age is between late 20s and late 40s**, with the most respondents between 30-49 years old
- **Overwhelmingly white**, with small pockets of southeast Asian (Hmong) and African-Americans; few Latinos or Hispanic
- **Gender almost perfectly split** between male and female, with slightly more females responding
- **Primary language is English**, with only a few exceptions
- **Family median income is about \$50,000**, with the majority of respondents selecting \$40-\$60K, but data is spread widely and fairly equally across all six income brackets, from \$0-\$20K to \$100K-plus
- **Conversations were rated extremely highly**, with a vast majority selecting “Excellent”
- Most said their experience with Engage Winona would make them **more likely to engage in future activities and conversations**
- **About 75 percent of respondents completed the optional prompt of writing themes and ideas** on backs of surveys, with some filling much of the page – a great sign of engagement that provided additional data

# LEADERS, SUPPORTERS, FRIENDS

## **ENGAGE WINONA LEADERSHIP**

Jerome Christenson, deputy editor, Winona Daily News  
Vicki Decker, community leader and volunteer  
Jessica Hawthorne, membership services, Winona Area Chamber of Commerce  
Ed Hoffman, entrepreneur, Ed's No Name Bar, The Boat House  
Sonny Misar, Journey Ministries and Radiant Church, Winona  
Maggie Modjeski, director of marketing, Sugar Loaf Senior Living  
Beth Forkner Moe, Envision It Together  
Pat Mutter, executive director, Visit Winona  
Scott Olson, president, Winona State University  
Della Schmidt, president, Winona Area Chamber of Commerce  
Mollee Sheehan, director of web communications, Winona State University  
Karin Sonneman, Winona County attorney  
Brian Voerding, editor, Winona Daily News

## **MOBILE CAFÉ CONVERSATIONS FACILITATION AND SUPPORT**

Cotter Schools  
Ed's No Name Bar  
Hiawatha Valley Mental Health  
Home and Community Options  
Minnesota State College Southeast  
Project FINE  
Saint Mary's University  
Sugar Loaf Senior Living  
Winona American Legion Veterans Council  
Winona Area Ministerial Association  
Winona Area Public Schools  
Winona County Drug Court  
Winona Friendship Center  
Winona State University  
Winona Volunteer Services

## **ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS**

Heather Casper  
Mary Farrell  
Malia Fox  
Lisa Gray  
Ed Hahn  
Beth Halleck

## ENGAGE WINONA COMMUNITY REPORT

Marci Hitz  
Deb McClellan  
Paul Mundt  
Julie Schoener  
Scott Sherman  
Janneke Sobeck  
Michelle Urbick  
Kate Weber

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT, TRAINING, GUIDANCE**

Blandin Foundation – Project leadership from Bill Mease, \$1,000 grant  
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation – \$1,000 grant

**WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT** from Winona graduates of the Blandin Community Leadership Program and many other community leaders and residents striving to make the Winona community a better place.