



# Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

The 2026 Stoughton Comprehensive Plan survey engaged a broad cross-section of the community to help shape the city's vision and priorities for the next twenty years. Through robust participation, residents provided valuable insights on key topics including:

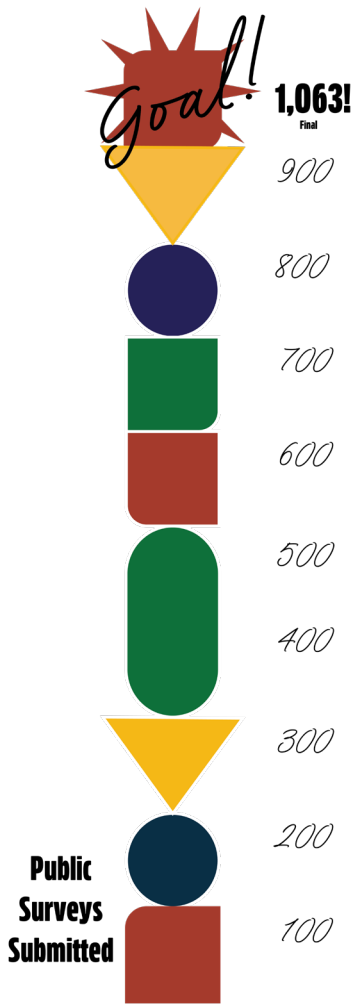
- a future vision for Stoughton
- housing
- transportation
- cultural and natural resources
- land use
- the local economy

The survey results offer a clear, community-driven foundation for updating the Comprehensive Plan, highlighting both the city's strengths and the challenges that matter most to its people. This synopsis summarizes the most significant findings and themes, providing guidance for city leaders, planners, and stakeholders as they chart Stoughton's path forward. Further detail of questions and responses will be included in the final Comprehensive Plan.



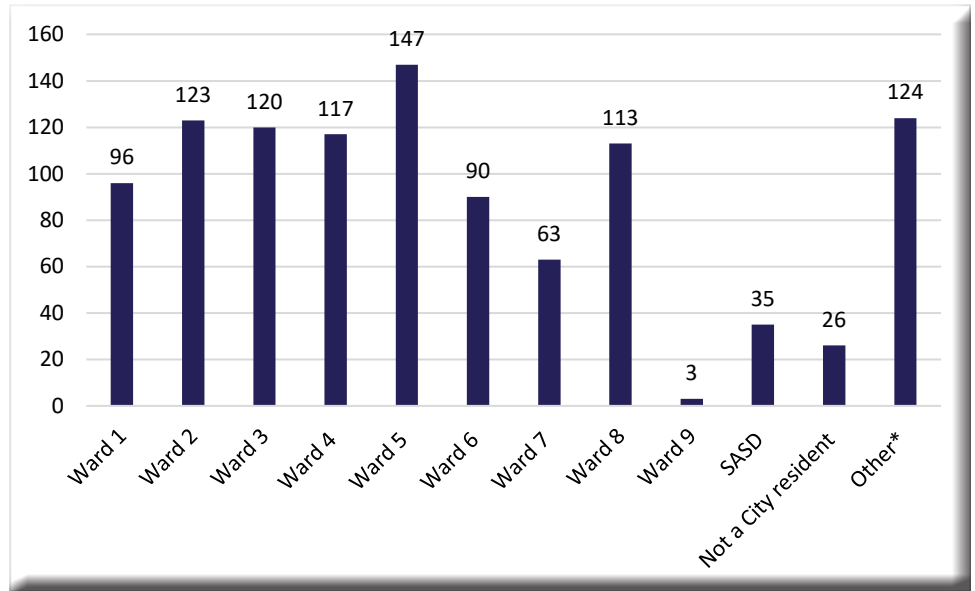
Prepared by:

April 2026



The survey received 1,063 responses from May - November 2025, surpassing the City's goal of 1,000 responses. 875 responses (82%) were from City residents, representing 8.8% of Stoughton's adult population.

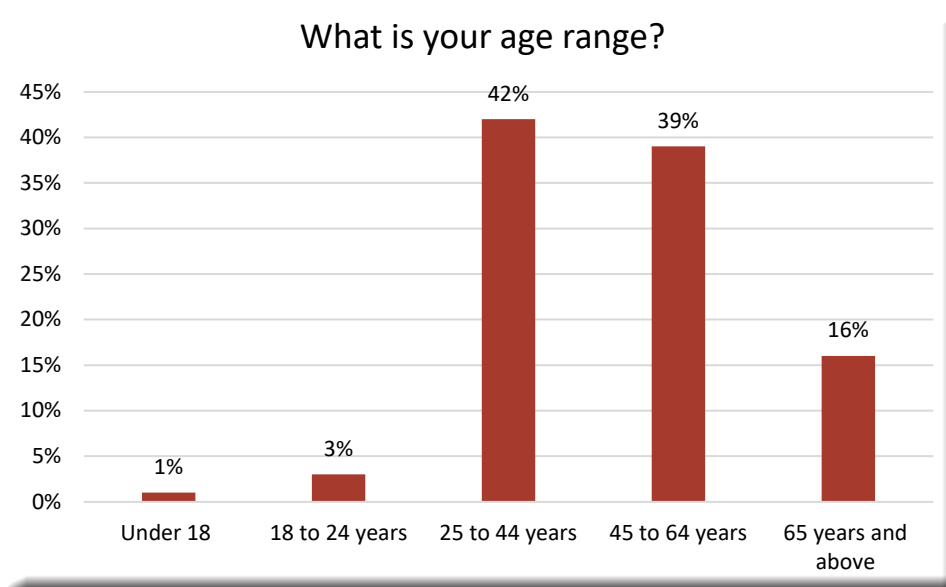
### Survey respondents by location of residence:



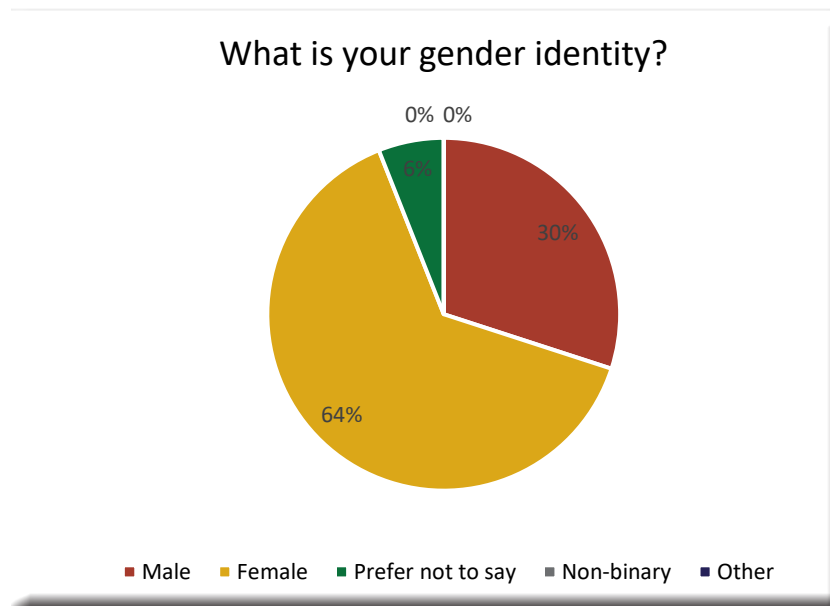
\*This category includes respondents from Dunkirk, Dunn, Pleasant Springs, and Rutland.

### Demographics

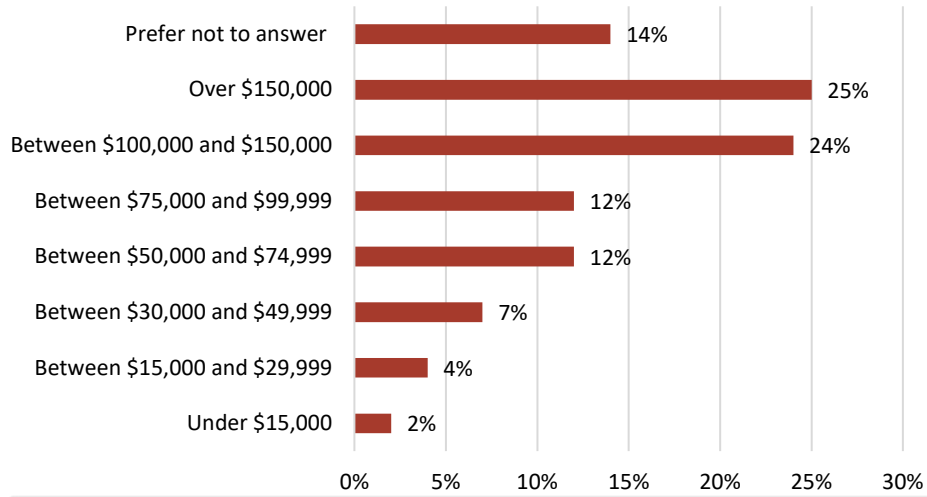
What is your age range?



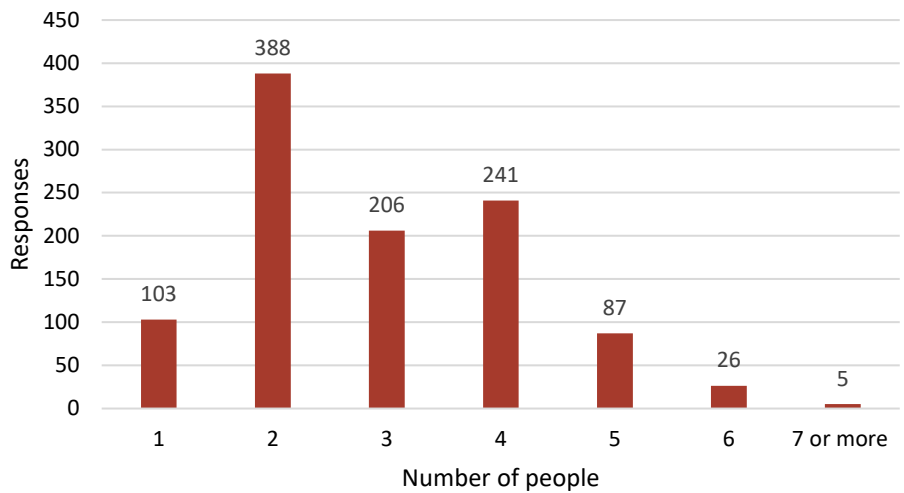
Which race or ethnicity do you identify with? (Select all that apply)	Percent
White	88%
Black or African American	1%
Hispanic	2%
Latino/a/x	1%
Asian	1%
Native American or Alaska Native	1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
Multiracial / Two or More Races	1%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Other	1%



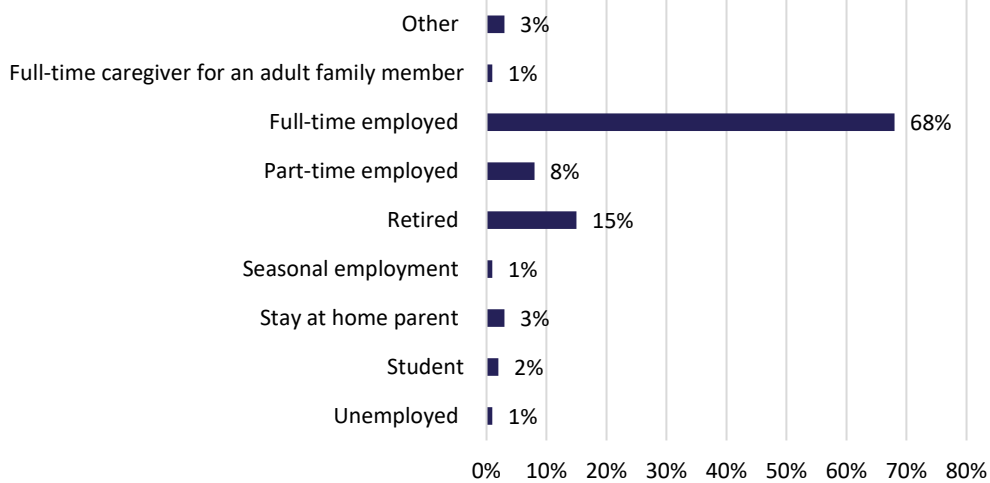
### What is your Household Income?



### How many people live in your household?



### What is your employment status?



## The top challenges facing Stoughton

(respondents could select up to three):

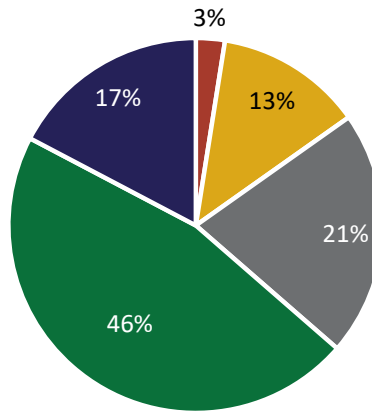
Challenge	Responses
Housing Affordability	77.5%
Community Services (schools, healthcare)	58.2%
Economic Growth and Job Opportunities	52.1%
Preservation of Natural Areas/Farmland	41.7%
Transportation and Traffic Congestion	32.3%

## What three words would you use to describe the future City of Stoughton?

Top Words	Meaning/Planning Signals
Growth / Growing	Strong perception that Stoughton is expanding and will continue to. Signals both opportunity and concern about pace of change.
Diverse / Diversity	Desire for a more inclusive, multicultural community.
Affordable / Unaffordable	Affordability is one of the most polarizing future themes—some envision affordable living; others fear high costs.
Welcoming / Friendly	Community identity rooted in hospitality and small-town character.
Expensive	Significant concern about rising housing costs and cost of living.
Vibrant / Active / Engaging	Desire for cultural events, recreation, and community activity.
Safe	Public safety remains a core aspiration and concern.
Family / Family-Friendly	Emphasis on youth amenities, schools, and multi-generational appeal.
Historic / Heritage / Norwegian	Strong desire to preserve cultural identity.
Inclusive / Equitable	Values around belonging, fairness, and representation.

## How would you rate Stoughton's performance?

Neighborhoods: Stoughton has welcoming neighborhoods where residents feel safe.



- We have a lot of work to do
- We have some work to do
- We are doing ok
- We are doing well
- We are doing great

### What 3 words would you use to describe the City of Stoughton today?

These are the top responses from those who answered this question.



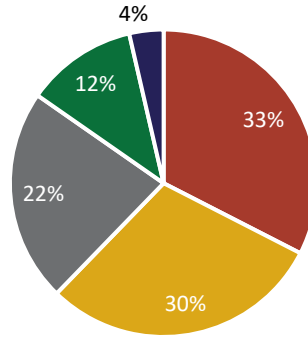
### What 3 words would you use to describe the future City of Stoughton?

These are the top responses from those who answered this question.



## How would you rate Stoughton's performance?

Housing: Stoughton provides diverse housing options that accommodate the needs and budgets of residents at every stage of life.



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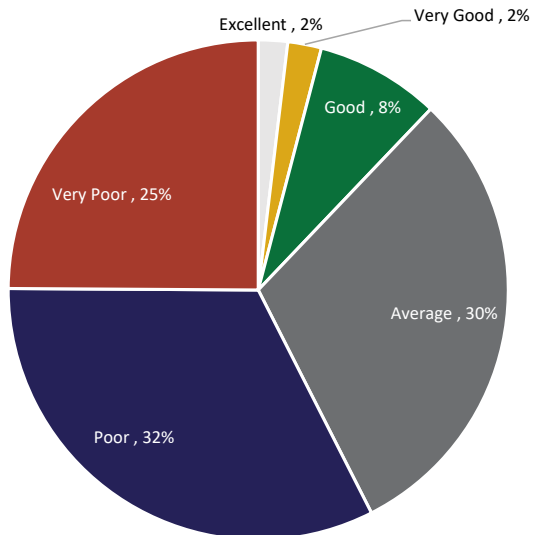
## Do you think there are enough affordable housing options in Stoughton for both renters and home-buyers?

### Combined Results:

Poor or Very Poor - 57.6%

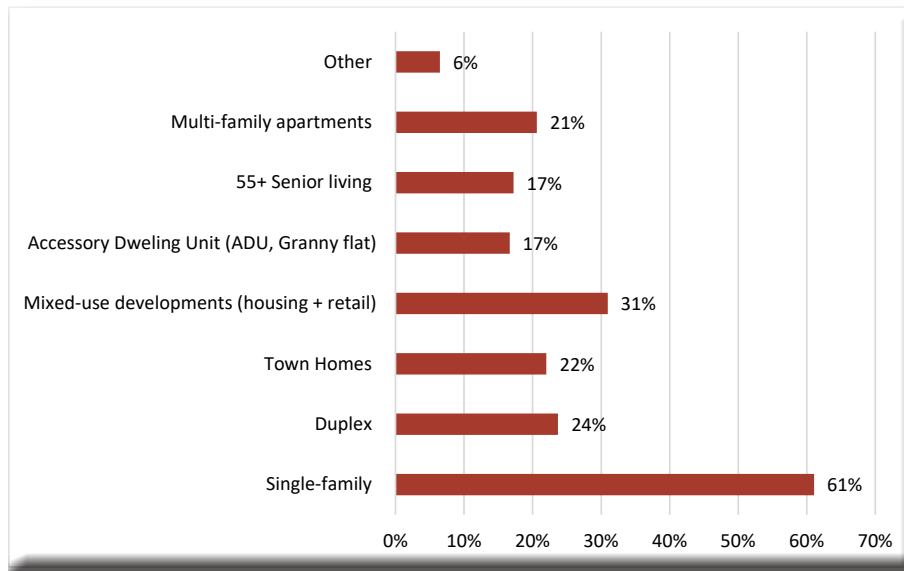
Average - 30.4%

Good, Very Good, or Excellent - 12.1%

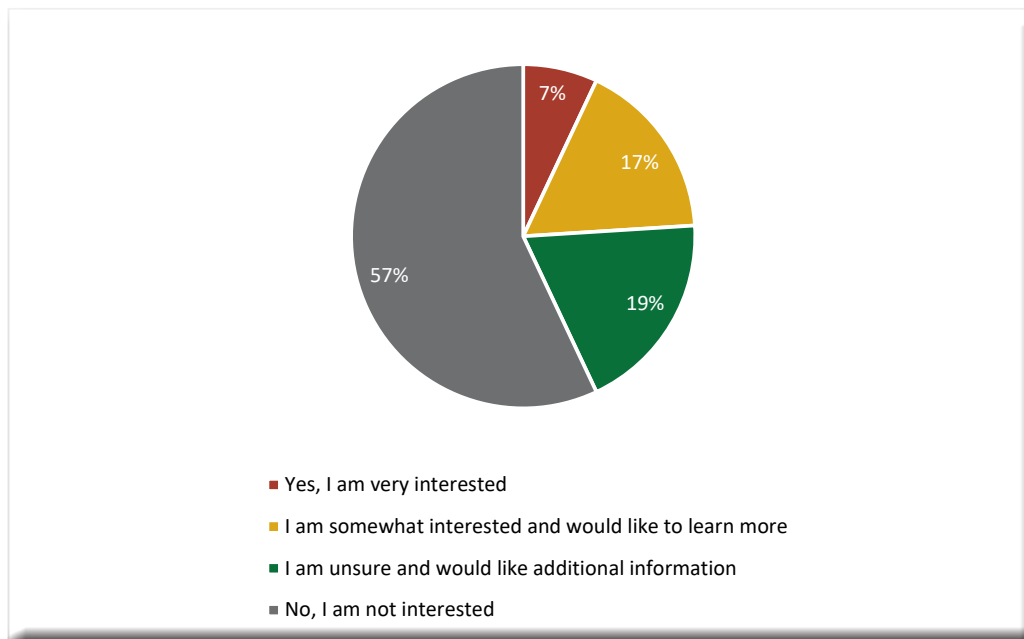


## Housing Types Stoughton Should Prioritize

(respondents could select up to two)

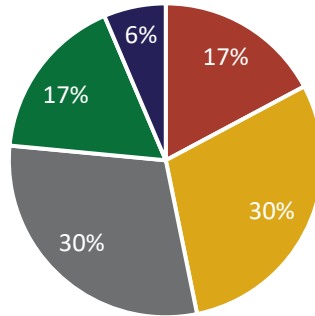


## Would you be interested in cooperative (co-op) housing?



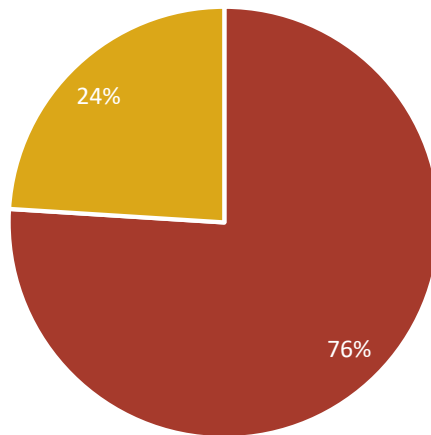
## How would you rate Stoughton's performance?

Transportation: Residents can easily reach places throughout Stoughton using various modes of transportation, including bus, car, bike, and walking.



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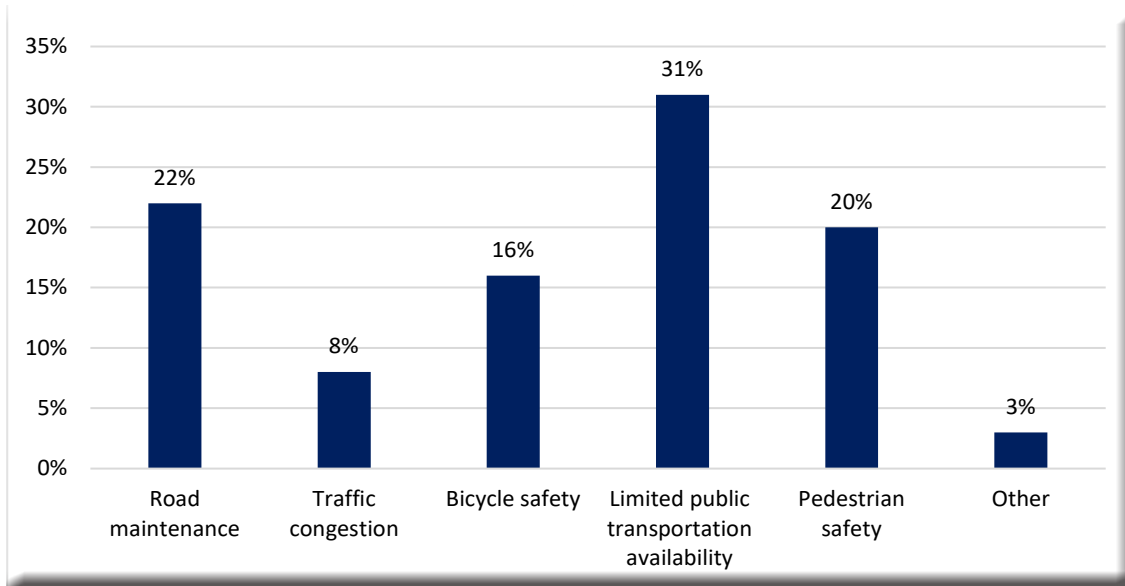
Would you support new forms of public transportation or alternative mobility option in Stoughton (e.g. shared electric scooters, regional transit expansion)?



- Yes
- No

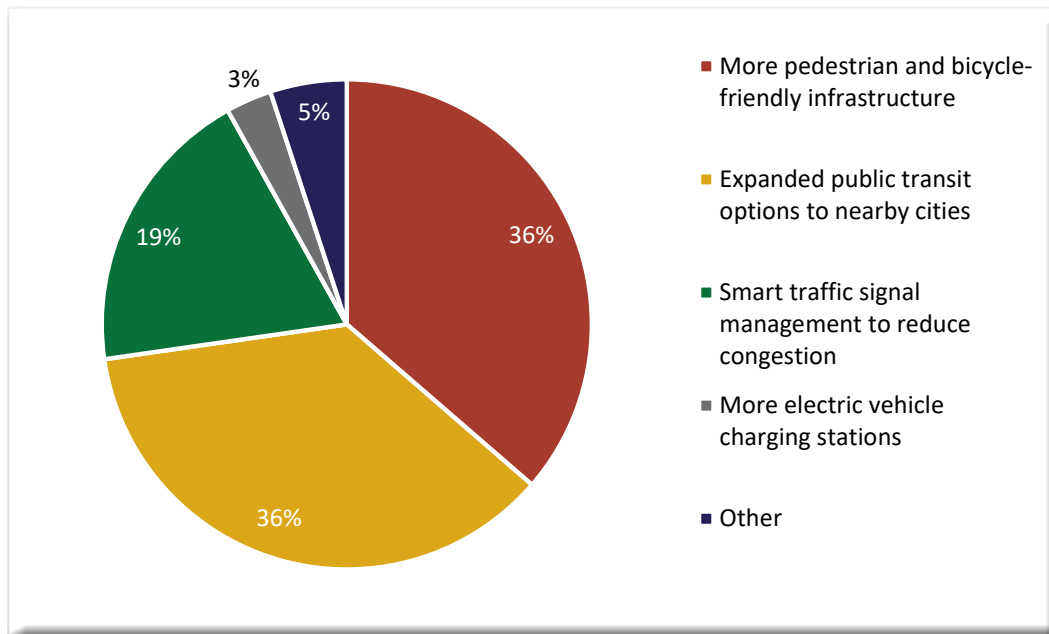
# What are the biggest transportation concerns in Stoughton?

(Respondents could select up to two)



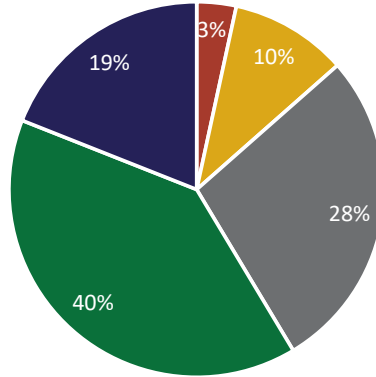
# What transportation improvements would most benefit Stoughton?

(Respondents could select up to two)



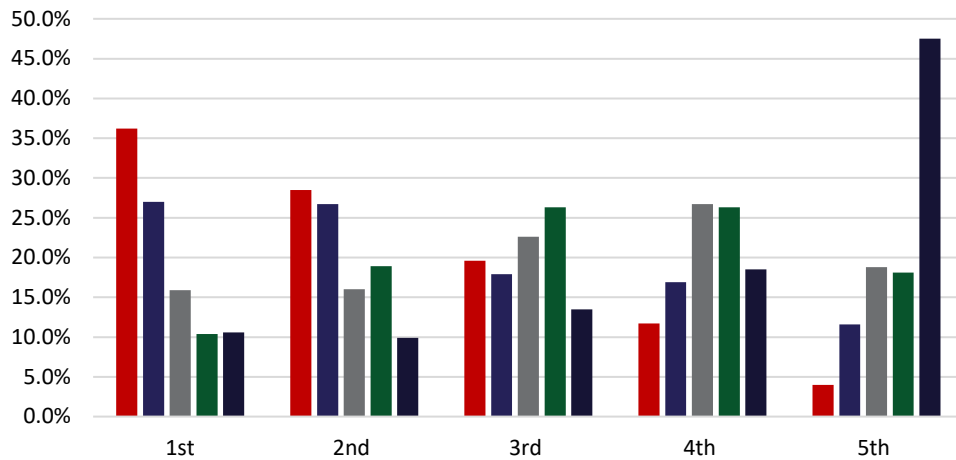
## How would you rate Stoughton's performance?

Services: Stoughton delivers essential services, such as water, waste management, and public safety, efficiently and at an affordable cost to meet the needs of its residents.



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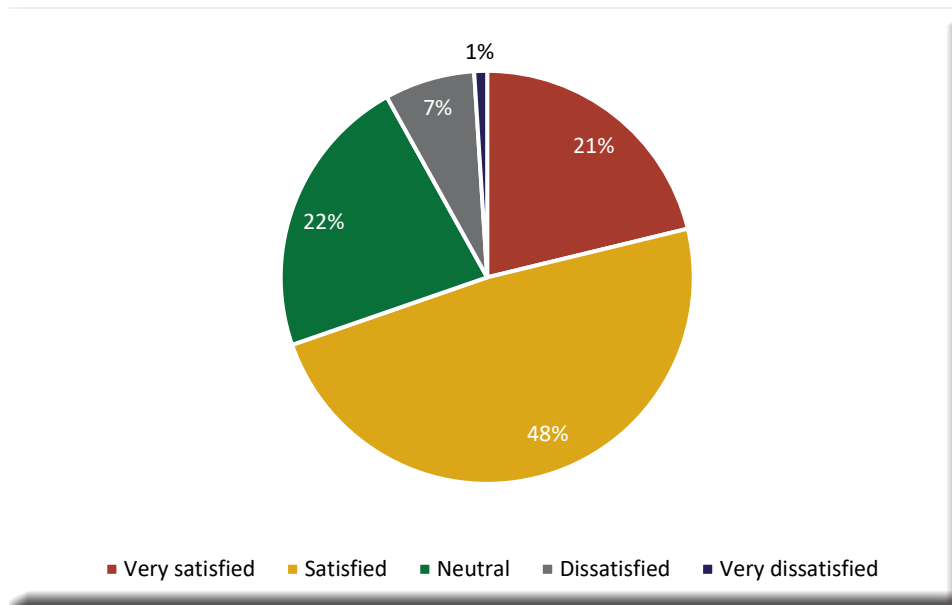
## Community Facilities Ranked by Order of Importance



- Parks & outdoor recreational spaces
- Indoor recreational facilities (e.g., gym, sports courts, swimming pool)
- Expanded library services & facilities
- Community center for events & programs
- More healthcare facilities & services

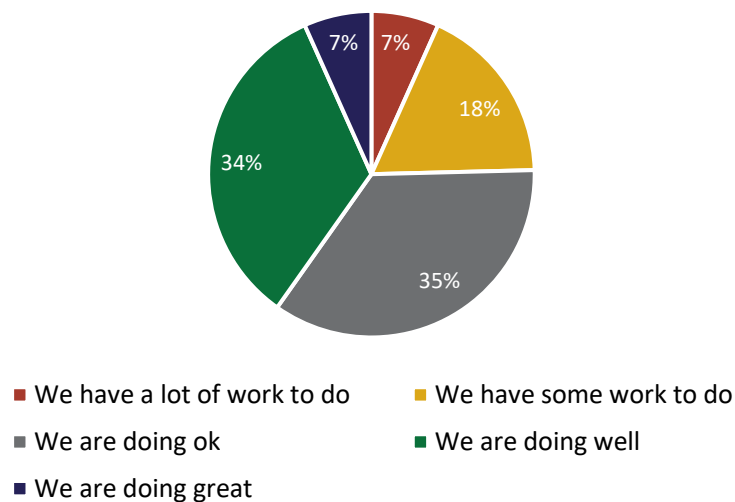
## How satisfied are you with the quality of public services?

parks, water, emergency services, etc.



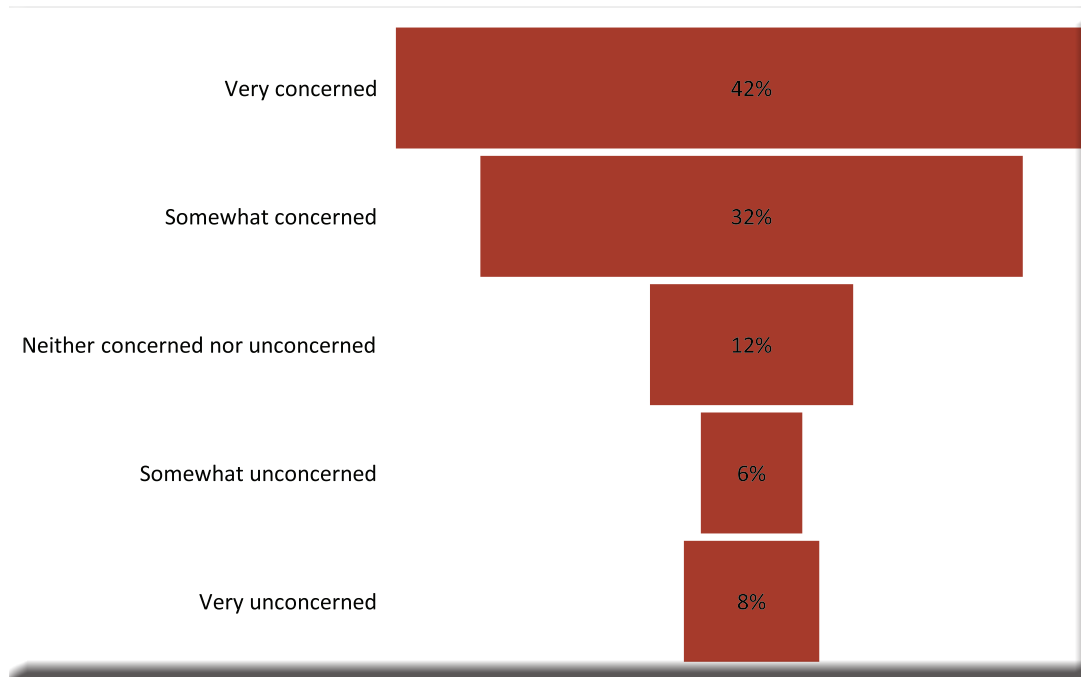
## How would you rate Stoughton's performance?

Environment: Stoughton prioritizes preserving the natural environment while ensuring residents have access to recreational opportunities.



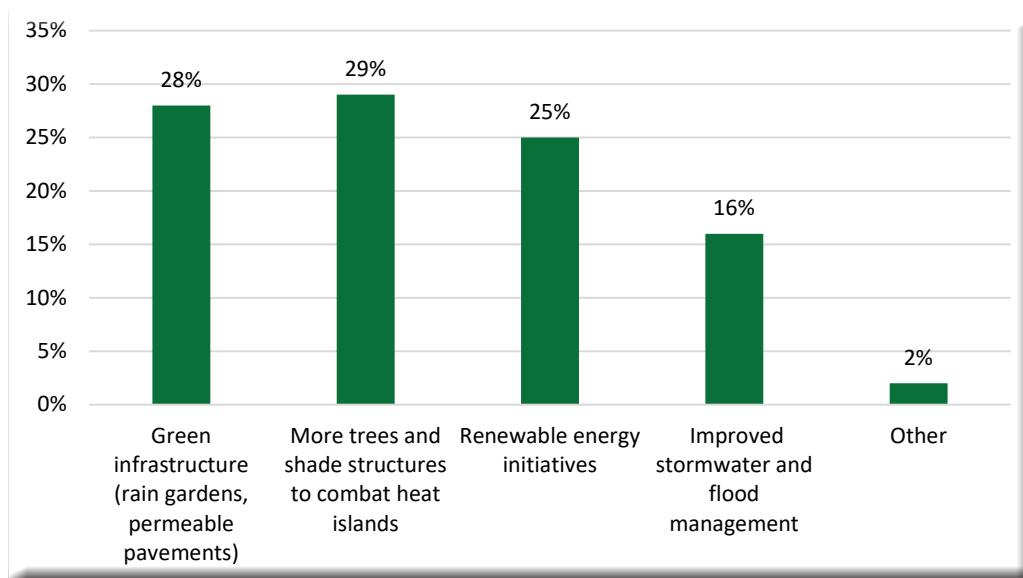
# How concerned are you about the local impacts of climate change?

(e.g., flooding, extreme weather, heat waves).

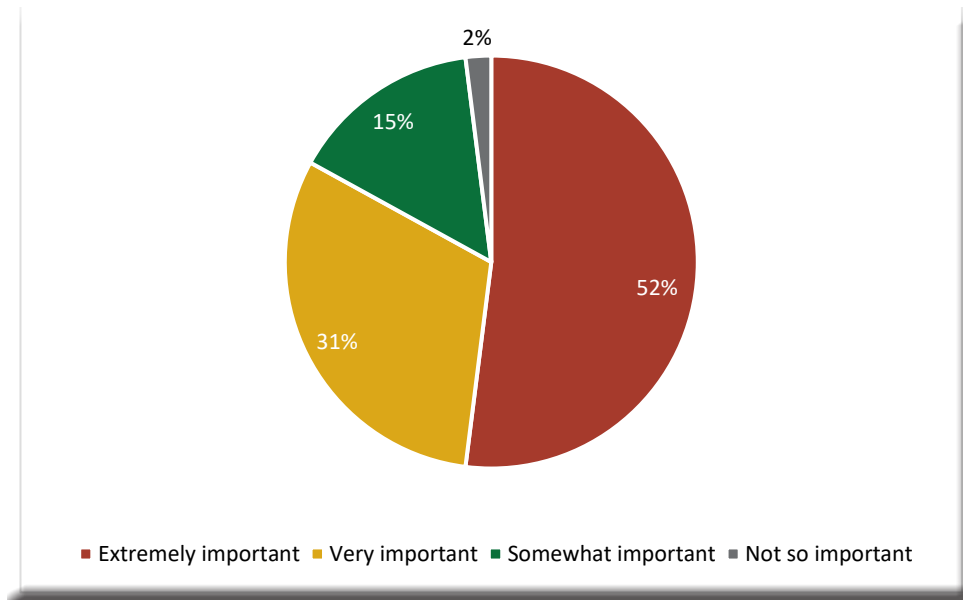


# What types of climate adaptation strategies should Stoughton prioritize?

(Respondents could select up to two)

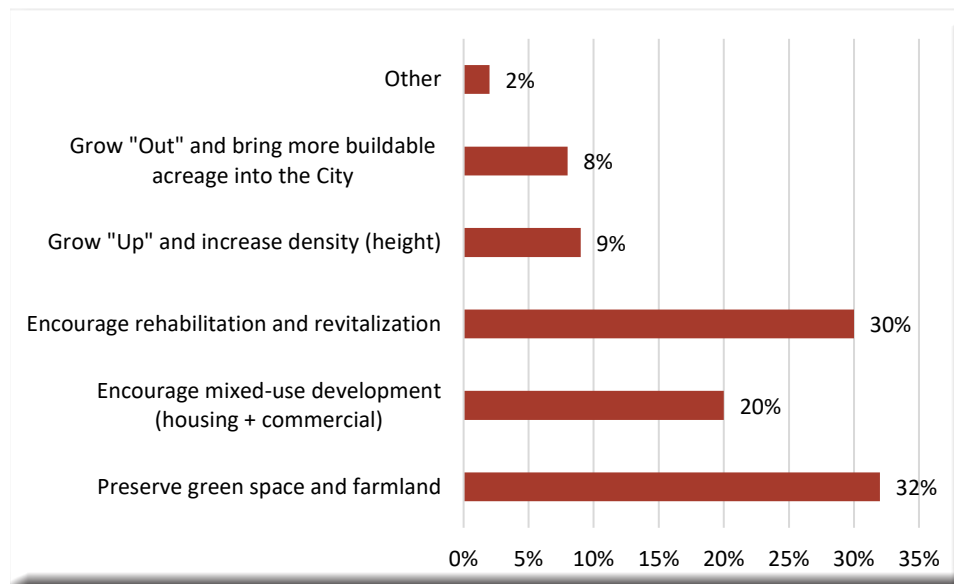


## How important is natural space land preservation to you?



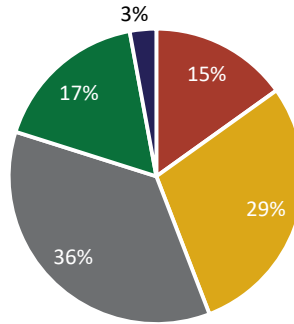
## How should Stoughton manage future growth and land development?

(Respondents could select up to two)



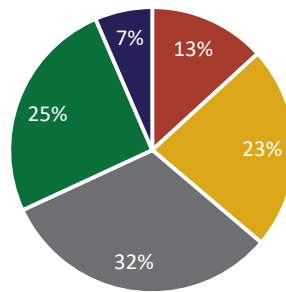
## How would you rate Stoughton's performance?

Development: Growth is occurring in appropriate areas, with costs that remain accessible for Stoughton's community members.



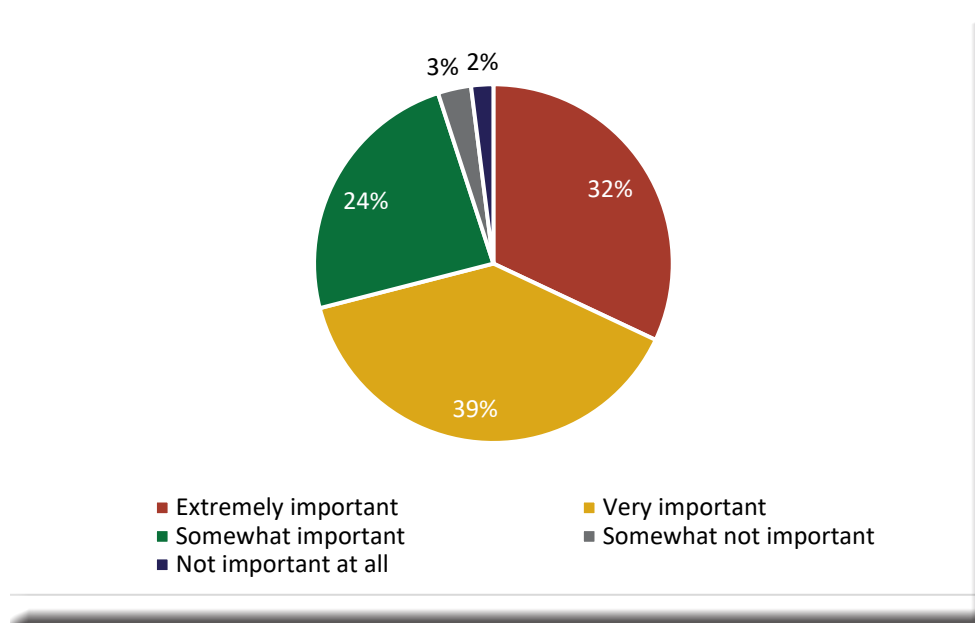
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Engagement: Stoughton fosters transparency, actively involves residents in decision-making, and keeps the community informed about its projects and initiatives.



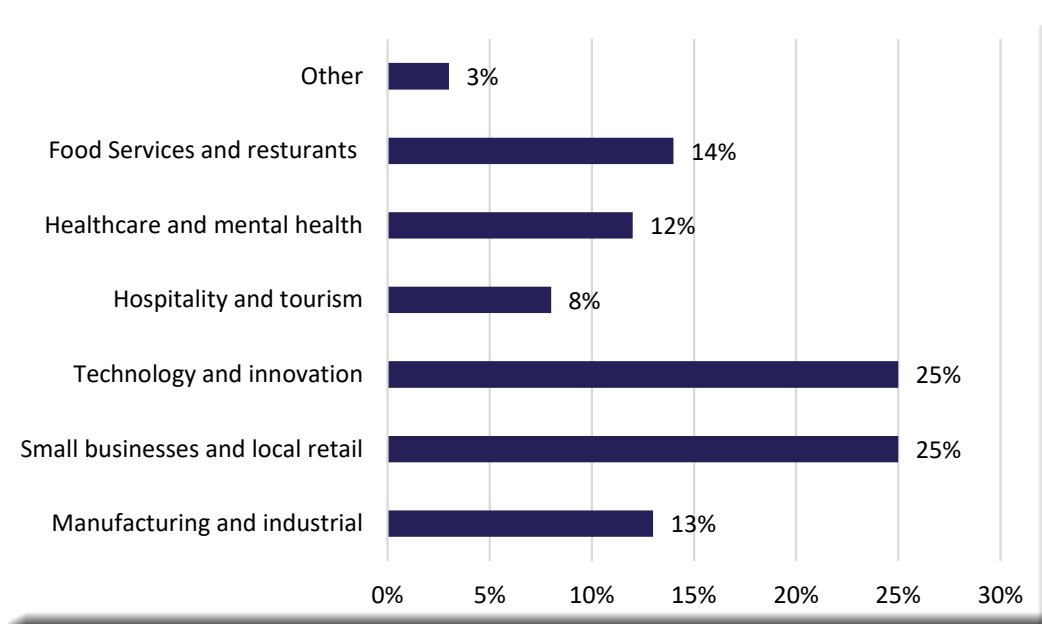
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## How important is collaboration between Stoughton and nearby communities for regional growth?



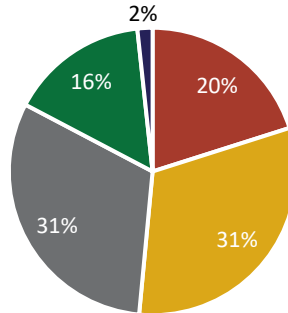
## What types of businesses should Stoughton focus on attracting?

(Respondents could select up to two)



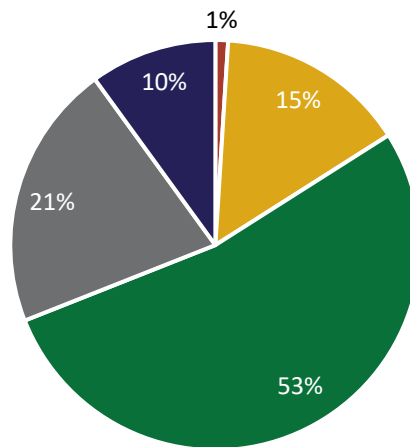
## How would you rate Stoughton's performance?

Jobs: Stoughton offers ample job opportunities that provide sufficient wages for residents to comfortably afford living in the community.



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## How would you rate job opportunities in Stoughton?



- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very Poor

## Key Themes

### **Housing Affordability**

Repeated concerns about rising home prices, property taxes, and limited starter or affordable housing. Calls for housing diversity, including senior and family options.

### **Community Services**

Strong appreciation for the library, which was described as the heart of the community but also noted as understaffed and underfunded. Requests for more staff, programs, and space.

### **Schools & Youth**

Widespread concern about declining enrollment, teacher retention, and a need for better funding and educational opportunities. Desire for more youth programs and activities.

### **Parks, Recreation & Pool**

Dozens of calls for a public or community pool, indoor/outdoor recreation center, and trail connectivity. Strong opposition to the whitewater park proposal.

### **Economic Development**

Requests for local restaurants, family-oriented businesses, and small retail. Resistance to chain stores, car washes, and vape shops.

### **Downtown & Riverfront**

Many want improved downtown vitality, more riverfront access, and revitalization of underused spaces like the Uniroyal site.

### **Taxes & Affordability**

Frustration with high property taxes and cost of living; some feel they're being "taxed out" of town.

### **Transportation & Accessibility**

Requests for better pedestrian safety, bike infrastructure, and transportation to Madison. Accessibility and parking downtown were frequent mentions.

### **Community Identity & Growth**

Mixed feeling some want modernization and growth, others want to "keep Stoughton small". Concerns about losing heritage and charm.

### **Public Safety Services**

Concerns about EMS staffing, crime, and speeding. Desire for full-time EMS/fire services.

### **Equity & Inclusion**

Emerging theme: calls to expand beyond Norwegian heritage to celebrate diversity and inclusion, including cultural events like Juneteenth.



## Community Outreach Roundup

The community of Stoughton had multiple opportunities and ways to get their voice heard through the public participation plan implemented in 2025

- **February:** [www.PlanStoughton.com](http://www.PlanStoughton.com) went live in February. The website highlighted public engagement opportunities, background on the comprehensive plan, and its importance to the future planning of Stoughton.
- **April 3:** Early promotion started in April at the Chamber of Commerce's Community Expo where an estimated 250 people were in attendance. Members of the Becker team handed out postcards and stickers with the website. One-week website analytics show 45 page views with one-minute views per session.
- **May:** a postcard with information about the comp plan and public engagement activities was included with Stoughton Utilities bills to 5,197 households
- **May 8:** Survey is live for public input. Through promotion on the City's Facebook page and emails to community leaders, one-week website analytics showed 463 website views and 161 survey responses.
- **May 16:** Syttende Mai Pop-up at Becker Professional Services, 183 W Main St. Members of the Becker team were available for questions and activities surrounding housing in Stoughton. 12 guests stopped in, multiple interactions outside and one-week website analytics saw 101 page views and 28 survey responses.
- **June 4:** Visioning session activities included a SWOT analysis, budgeting game, land use exercise, and vision for the future.
- **August 12:** Targeted emails were sent through Stoughton Area Resource Team, School District (families and faculty), local employers, and other community groups.
- **August 16:** Coffee Break Festival vendor participation featuring the opportunity to vote on a Vision Statement..
- **August 25:** Chamber of Commerce Lunch and Learn where members of the Becker team provided an overview of the comprehensive planning process and facilitated a group exercise on economic development with approximately 50 participants.
- **August 28:** Gazebo Musikk participation featuring the opportunity to vote on a Vision Statement.
- **Sept 10 & 11:** Two focus groups were held on Housing. Those participating helped share the survey link with one-week week analytics seeing 297 page views and 51 survey responses.
- **September 17:** Around the Clock full page dedicated to the Comprehensive Plan and promotion of the survey.
- **November 1:** Final survey push was sent via the City's Facebook page. The survey closed with a total of 1,063 responses, surpassing our goal of 1,000.

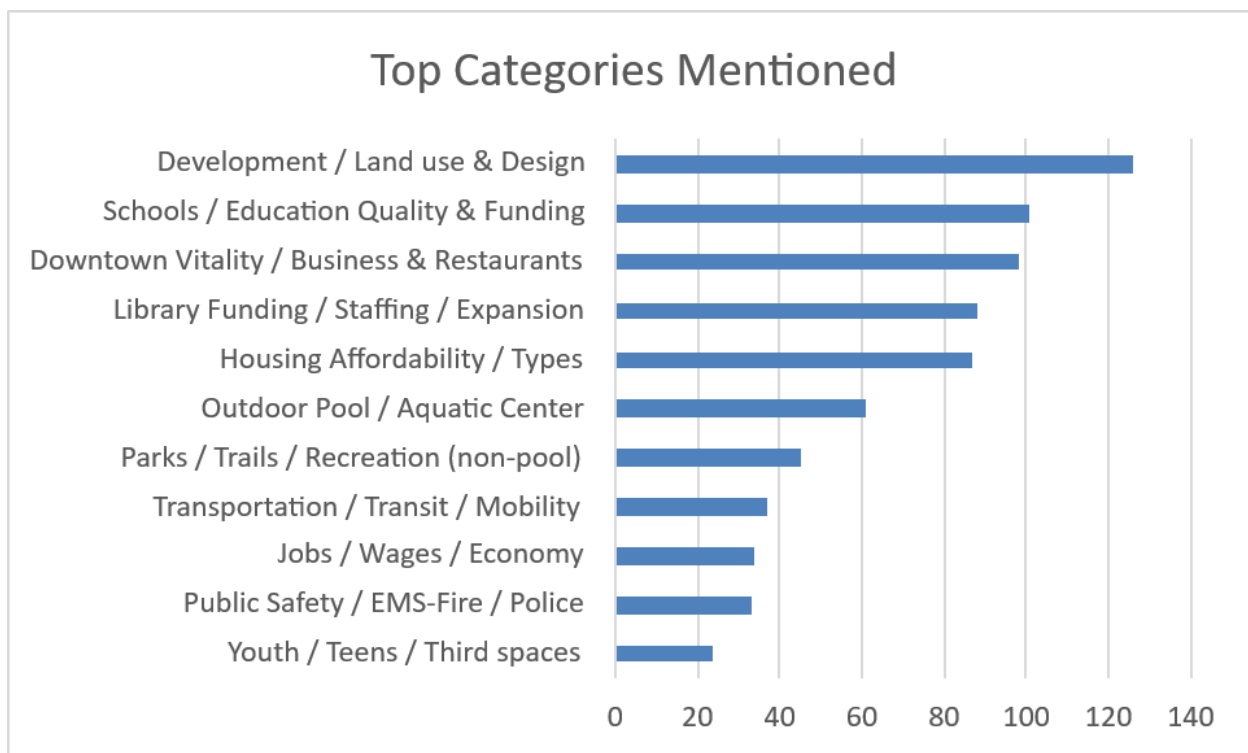


## Public Input Summary

This summary synthesizes hundreds of public comments gathered through the comprehensive plan community survey and engagement activities; the survey alone had 536 open-ended comments. The most frequent themes include housing affordability, school and youth opportunities, riverfront/downtown revitalization, demand for a public pool/aquatic center, transportation and accessibility, and scaling city services (notably library and EMS) to match growth.

The top parent themes were Development/Land Use & Design (23.5%), Schools/Education (18.8%), Downtown Vitality (18.3%), Library (16.4%), Housing Affordability/Types (16.2%), and Outdoor Pool/Aquatics (11.4%). Residents frequently expressed a desire for the City to manage growth quality and pace, protect small town/historic character, expand diverse dining and downtown activation, strengthen schools and the library, improve housing affordability and mix, advance trail/riverwalk connections, and deliver year-round youth/teen spaces—especially an outdoor community pool.

Two cross-cutting concerns appeared across categories: (1) trust and transparency in city decision making, and (2) equity of access to housing and amenities (youth/teens, seniors, low-income households, people with disabilities, and east side residents).



Overall, 184 comments were objectively positive. Positive comments most often expressed pride in Stoughton's small town character, sense of community, parks and trails, library, and overall quality of life. Many conveyed optimism about the city's future and appreciation for recent improvements, while encouraging continued investment that preserves what residents value most.

294 comments were neutral. Neutral comments tended to be constructive and solution-oriented, identifying needs and opportunities without strong emotional framing. They frequently offered specific suggestions—such as expanding housing options, improving transportation, increasing library staffing, or enhancing parks, trails, and events—while acknowledging both strengths and challenges facing the community.



58 comments were explicitly negative. Negative comments focused on affordability pressures (housing, taxes, wages), concerns that growth and development are eroding community character, and frustration with perceived gaps in city services—especially EMS capacity, transparency, and decision-making. These comments often reflected fear of being priced out, dissatisfaction with specific projects, or concern that leadership is not adequately responding to resident priorities.

## Executive Snapshot — What We Heard Most

- **Housing Affordability & Choice:** Strong concern about high property taxes, rising rents, and the lack of starter homes and senior-friendly housing; interest in “missing middle” options.
- **Schools, Youth, & Retention of Families:** Desire to strengthen schools, increase teacher retention, and expand free/low-cost youth spaces and programs; concerns about school district enrollment decline.
- **Downtown & Riverfront:** Pride in historic Main Street; large interest in riverfront activation (riverwalk, mixed-use, green space), clean-up of blight, and (in many comments) relocating heavy industrial uses like Uniroyal away from downtown.
- **Parks & Recreation:** Overwhelming interest in a community pool/aquatic facility (often contrasted with opposition to the whitewater park), plus inclusive parks and more trails.
- **Transportation & Accessibility:** Calls for safer walking/biking, lighting, ADA upgrades to storefronts and civic buildings, better crossings near schools, and regional transportation to Madison.
- **City Services & Public Safety:** Residents see many services “stretched thin” and ask for more library staff/space and full-time EMS; City staff share concerns about staffing needed to match growth.
- **Balanced Identity & Inclusion:** Preserve small-town and Norwegian heritage while expanding celebrations and spaces that reflect Stoughton’s broader cultural diversity.

## Deeper Dive into Key Themes

### 1. Housing Affordability & Options; Broader Affordability Concerns

Residents want attainable entry-level housing options, rightsized senior apartments, and accessible homes within the city—without pushing sprawl.

Input on housing affordability and options consistently reflected concerns that rising home prices, rents, and property taxes are outpacing local wages, making it difficult for young families, seniors, and longtime residents to remain in Stoughton. Many respondents called for a wider range of housing options—such as starter homes, affordable rentals, and accessible housing—while also emphasizing that broader affordability pressures are closely tied to jobs, taxes, and the cost of living overall.

- “Our adult kids ... would love to come back to Stoughton ... but they can’t find affordable housing.”
- “Most of the homes being built/sold are over \$300,000 or are 55+... We need more starter homes.”
- “I really love Stoughton but housing in this area is very expensive.”
- “Rent and home prices feel like Madison without Madison wages.”
- “Property taxes are pricing people out of homes they’ve lived in for decades.”
- “Affordable housing and higher paying jobs are a must.”



## 2. Schools, Youth Spaces & Family Attraction

Residents link strong schools and family/youth-friendly activities to enrollment, talent retention, and longterm community health. Desire to attract more young families to Stoughton and interest in more activities and “third spaces” for kids and adults (places other than home or work where people can gather).

- “We need to focus on attracting young families and the way to do that is with great schools!”
- “There are not enough opportunities for young people... Free after-school programs and teen spaces matter.”
- “We need more activities and facilities for youth. Teens need places to go that aren’t sports based.”
- “Supporting young families is key if we want to stop declining school enrollment.”
- “Would also love to see growth and improvement in SASD.”
- “We need more free or low cost things to do, especially for families.”

## 3. Downtown & Riverfront Activation (and Industrial Adjacency)

People want a more walkable, active riverfront (riverwalk, dining, recreation, green space) and visible progress on blight remediation. Many comments specifically concern Uniroyal and odors downtown; there’s strong support for incentives to move heavy industry away from the riverfront while preserving jobs.

Input about downtown and riverfront activation emphasized the importance of strengthening downtown as a vibrant, walkable center through better building upkeep, business activity, events, and improved access to the Yahara River. Many respondents also raised concerns about the proximity of industrial uses—particularly along the riverfront—expressing a desire to reduce negative impacts such as odors, aesthetics, and heavy traffic so the riverfront and downtown can better function as community and visitor assets.

- “We have such a great opportunity with the river running through downtown... unlock the potential of the river.”
- “Stoughton should work harder to get Uniroyal out of downtown, redevelop the site, and improve access to the river.”
- “Downtown is a huge asset, but many buildings look neglected.”
- “Shops close early and Main Street feels dead in the evenings.”
- “Downtown should be more walkable and inviting.”
- “Downtown small businesses are what make Stoughton special.”

## 4. Parks, Trails & an Aquatic Center

Public input shows broad support for a community pool or aquatic facility (often preferring it over a whitewater park), closing trail gaps, and building truly inclusive play spaces.

Input strongly emphasized the need for improved parks, expanded trail connections, and better access to the riverfront, with many residents viewing these amenities as central to quality of life and community health. There was especially strong and repeated support for a public aquatic center, often framed as a priority family amenity and a more broadly supported alternative to other large recreation projects.

- “Please prioritize a city swimming pool... Families leave town to use neighboring pools.”



- “Finish trails and connect to Lower Yahara and Madison.”
- “Being a grandparent, parks are very important—we need inclusive parks for all ages and abilities.”
- “We really need more fun recreational activities that are friendly for all ages like a pool or mini golf.”

## 5. Transportation, Accessibility, & Safety

Residents ask for safer crossings (especially by schools), sidewalks on key routes, bike lanes/wayfinding, and mobility to Madison for essential services. ADA access to storefronts and civic buildings is also a frequent request.

Input on transportation, accessibility, and safety emphasized concerns about speeding traffic, unsafe crossings, and gaps in sidewalks and bike/pedestrian infrastructure, particularly near schools and for people without cars. Residents also highlighted the need for improved accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities, along with stronger EMS/fire response capacity to ensure public safety keeps pace with growth.

- “We need transportation to Madison... The lack of options is a problem for seniors and those without cars.”
- “Most stores are still not handicap accessible... Not enough handicap parking.”
- “Bike and pedestrian safety needs to be taken more seriously.”
- “Accessibility isn’t just ramps – it’s transportation, services, and inclusion.”
- “Parking and accessibility barriers keep people from fully participating downtown.”

## 6. City Services, Library/EMS, and Policing

While noted as a beloved and key community resource, comments consistently highlight the desire for increased library staffing and space. Residents also call for full-time EMS and upgrades to police facilities and operations. City staff (Public Works, Police, Library, Utilities, HR) stress the importance of staffing to match growth and facility needs as growth continues.

Input on city services emphasized strong appreciation for core services—particularly the library—alongside widespread concern that staffing levels, hours, and facilities have not kept pace with community needs. Many respondents also called for improved EMS capacity and response times and expressed mixed views on policing, with some praising safety overall while others raised concerns about transparency, priorities, and community trust.

- “Essential city services are understaffed. The Library in particular needs more staff.”
- “We need a full time EMS. Response times to calls are terrible.”
- Public Works: “As the community continues to grow, our biggest challenge is adding adequate staff... to maintain parks, roadways and stormwater infrastructure.”
- “The library is amazing but clearly understaffed.”
- “The Opera House and library are major cultural assets.”

## 7. Balanced Identity, Inclusion & Events

People love the “small-town feel” and Norwegian heritage—and also want more inclusive celebrations (e.g., Juneteenth, broader cultural programming).

Input about Stoughton’s cultural identity emphasized strong pride in the



community's small-town character and Norwegian heritage, while also expressing a desire for broader inclusion and more diverse cultural representation. Many respondents called for expanded, better-promoted events that are welcoming to all ages and backgrounds and that balance traditional celebrations with more inclusive, year-round community programming.

- "I love this size of community and how friendly everyone is."
- "The 'close knit' feeling is a welcome change from larger cities."
- "Love living here, need some growth but keep Stoughton small town charm."
- "Preserving Stoughton's historic character is critical to its identity."
- "We should balance Norwegian heritage with more inclusive cultural events."
- "We don't want to lose what makes Stoughton different from every other town."

## 8. Businesses, Industry, & Employment

Residents consistently emphasized the need for higher-paying, living-wage jobs and a more intentional mix of businesses, favoring innovative, professional, and locally owned employers over additional low-wage retail or duplicative chain businesses. Many respondents linked stronger employment opportunities to improved affordability, school stability, and the city's ability to retain young adults and families.

- "We need innovative and industrial employers, not more Kwik Trips."
- "Business mix should reflect community goals, not just tax base."
- "More white collar and professional job opportunities are needed."
- "Local businesses are what foster community here."
- "We don't need more vape shops, car washes, or sub places."
- "Living wage jobs are hard to find in Stoughton."
- "We need higher paying jobs to match the cost of living."
- "Attract employers that provide benefits and career paths."
- "We are losing talent to other Dane County communities."

## 9. East Side

Input about the East Side consistently highlighted a perception of underinvestment and lack of basic amenities, with residents calling for more grocery, retail, and dining options so they do not need to travel across town for everyday needs. Many respondents emphasized the importance of thoughtful, well-designed East Side development to improve equity, appearance, and connectivity while avoiding strip-style sprawl.

- "There is a lack of grocery and retail options on the east side"
- "There is very little investment on the east side compared to downtown."
- "The east side feels disconnected and neglected."
- "Restaurants and retail on the east side would help balance the city."



# SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

This SWOT analysis synthesizes public input from the community survey, staff engagement, and community activities conducted as part of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan update. It reflects residents', stakeholders', and City staff's views on Stoughton's current conditions and future direction.

## Strengths

### Strong Sense of Community and Identity

- Residents consistently express pride in Stoughton's small-town feel, walkable downtown, historic buildings, and sense of belonging.
- Community festivals, events, and volunteerism contribute to strong civic engagement.
- The Library, Senior Center, and parks are viewed as "anchors" and trusted public spaces.

### Historic Downtown and Natural Assets

- Stoughton's historic downtown, Carnegie Library, and Opera House are seen as distinguishing features.
- The Yahara River and Lake Kegonsa are widely viewed as underutilized but highly valuable natural assets.
- Existing walkability and compact downtown form provide a solid foundation for revitalization and redevelopment.

### Quality Public Facilities and Utilities

- Residents and staff cite reliable municipal utilities, strong park and trail infrastructure, and a highly regarded hospital.
- City staff are repeatedly described as dedicated, professional, and responsive.
- Prior investments in infrastructure, trails, and parks are positively recognized.

### Location and Regional Access

- Stoughton's proximity to Madison and Janesville is considered a major advantage.
- Residents value being "close but distinct" from Madison, maintaining independence while benefiting from regional access.

## Weaknesses

### Housing Affordability and Limited Housing Choice

- Many residents feel priced out by rising home values, rents, and property taxes.
- There is a lack of starter homes, accessible housing, and options for young families and seniors.
- New housing is often perceived as too expensive, poorly matched to local wages, or age-restricted.

### Under-Resourced City Services Relative to Growth

- Public input consistently cites staffing shortages in the Library, EMS, Police, Public Works, and other departments.
- Library space and staffing are seen as insufficient for its expanding role as a community hub and service provider.
- EMS response times and reliance on volunteer staffing raise safety concerns for a growing city.



## **School District Challenges**

- Declining enrollment, teacher retention issues, and concerns about academic reputation are significant community worries.
- Many residents believe the school district is not being positioned as a competitive asset for attracting families.

## **Transportation and Accessibility Gaps**

- Limited public or regional transportation options, especially to Madison, affect seniors, lower-income residents, and workers.
- Incomplete sidewalks, unsafe crossings, and limited accessibility for people with disabilities are recurring concerns.

## **Opportunities**

### **Riverfront and Downtown Transformation**

- Strong public support exists for revitalizing the riverfront with public access, mixed-use development, green space, and riverwalks.
- Redevelopment of blighted or underutilized properties could strengthen downtown vibrancy and economic activity.
- Strategic relocation of heavy industrial uses from downtown could unlock transformational redevelopment opportunities.

### **Housing Innovation**

- Updating zoning to allow “missing middle” housing (duplexes, small-lot homes, accessory dwelling units, cottage courts) aligns closely with public priorities.
- Infill and mixed-use development can add housing without sprawl and strengthen existing neighborhoods.
- Partnerships and incentives can help align new housing with affordability and accessibility goals.

### **Investment in Families, Youth, and Education**

- Expanding youth programming, school partnerships, childcare capacity, and free/low-cost activities can help reverse enrollment decline.
- Coordinated planning between the City and School District can improve longterm fiscal and community outcomes.
- A community aquatic center or pool is seen as a high-impact amenity for family attraction and retention.

### **Economic Development Diversification**

- Residents strongly support attracting higher-paying, professional, and innovative jobs—not just retail or low-wage service work.
- East-side development offers opportunities for grocery, childcare, healthcare, and neighborhood-serving businesses.
- Tourism, arts, and events tied to downtown and the riverfront can expand year-round economic activity.



## **Threats**

### **Rising Costs and Affordability Pressures**

- Continued increases in property taxes, housing costs, and utility rates risk displacing long-time residents, seniors, and young families.
- Perception that Stoughton is becoming unaffordable compared to wages could reduce long-term community stability.

### **Growth Outpacing Capacity**

- Without proactive staffing, capital investment, and service expansion, growth could strain infrastructure and diminish quality of life.
- Residents fear that inadequate planning will lead to service degradation and public safety risks.

### **Loss of Community Character**

- Many residents worry about “cookie-cutter” development, over-sprawl, and becoming indistinguishable from other Madison-area suburbs.
- Tension between preserving historic character and accommodating change could delay needed investments.

### **Declining School Enrollment and Workforce Retention**

- Continued enrollment decline may weaken schools, making it harder to attract families and employers.
- If young adults cannot afford to live or see opportunity in Stoughton, population aging and talent loss may accelerate.

### **Divisiveness and Trust Gaps**

- Some residents express frustration about transparency, decision-making, and feeling unheard.
- Highly polarized debates (e.g., riverfront projects) risk slowing progress and eroding trust if not addressed through clear communication and inclusive engagement.