

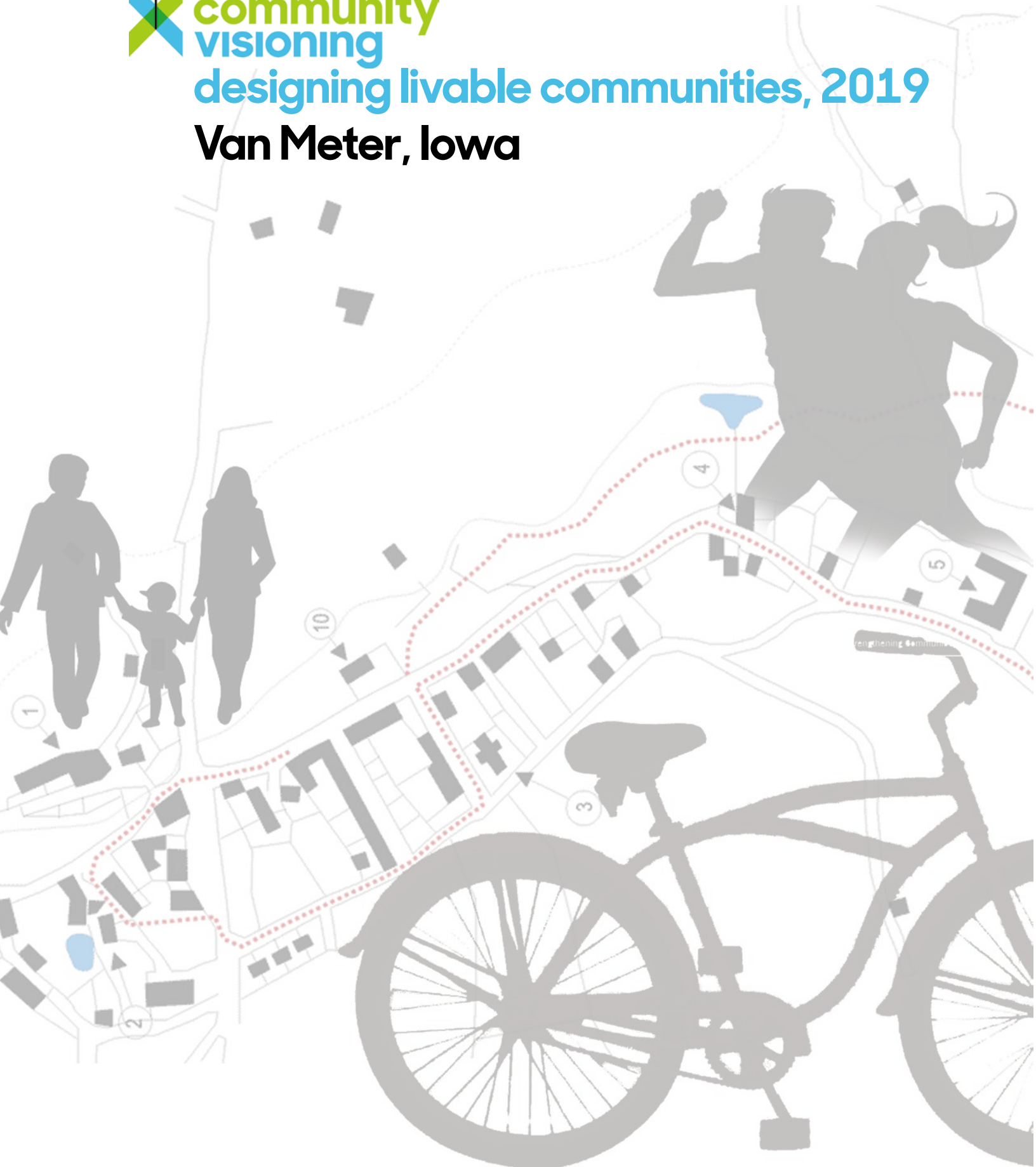


Iowa's Living Roadways

**community
visioning**

designing livable communities, 2019

Van Meter, Iowa



Introduction

The Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program is a collaboration involving the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Living Roadway Trust Fund, Iowa State University and Trees Forever. One of the primary objectives of the Community Visioning Program is to assist participants in the process of building livable communities—that is, creating an environment that not only meets residents' basic needs but is also aesthetically appealing.

With assistance from Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology, ISU visioning program staff conducted a survey to better understand the transportation patterns, behaviors, needs, and desires of Van Meter residents. Surveys were mailed to 300 randomly selected residents living in Van Meter and the surrounding area. To increase the response rate, the study was publicized through the local media and follow-up packets were mailed to nonrespondents.

With adjustments for ineligible respondents (e.g., incorrect addresses, no longer living in the community), the final sample size was 249. A total of 123 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 49.4%. (A response rate of 20% is considered valid.)

Why Do A Survey?

The survey gives the visioning steering committee objective, representative information for the goal-setting phase of community visioning. The quantitative data collected from survey responses complements the qualitative information gathered from the focus groups at the transportation assets and barriers workshop.

The modes of transportation that residents use and the routes they take suggest suitable types of transportation enhancements in these areas. Having a sense for people's willingness to help either financially or with their time is important because many transportation enhancements are funded from multiple sources, including grants, private donations, in-kind contributions, and volunteers. Understanding what types of improvements are important to residents gives the committee insight into how to prioritize projects.

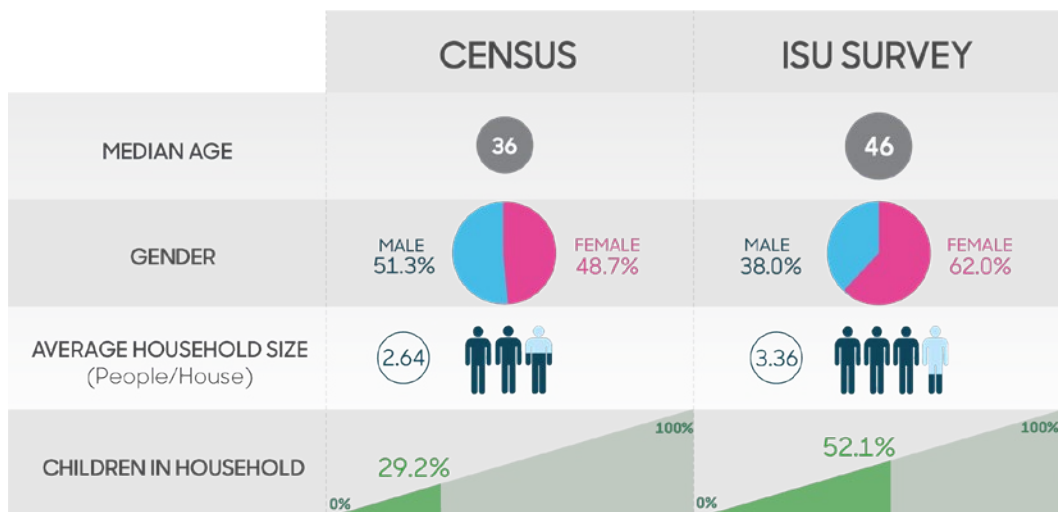
What Did We Find Out?

We asked survey recipients what routes they used most often for going to work, walking, and biking. We also asked whether or not residents would like a recreation trail and where they think it should be. We also discovered what residents think is most important in terms of transportation enhancements that address issues such as accessibility, mobility, and safety. Finally, we learned whether or not residents are willing to contribute their time or their financial resources to making enhancements to Van Meter. This report summarizes the results of the survey as follows:

- Willingness to Help
- Enhancement Priorities
- Commuting Routes
- Walking Routes
- Desired Qualities

How Did We Do?

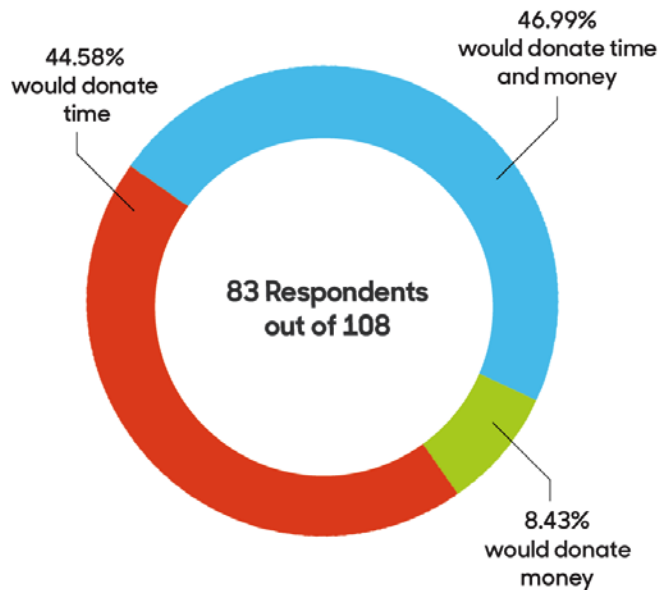
The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from those obtained from the 2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate. For example, the survey respondents median age of 46 is significantly older than the 2017 estimated average age for Van Meter residents of 36. In terms of gender, the percentage of female survey respondents is much higher than that of the census. Average household size and number of children in the household among survey respondents are significantly higher than the 2017 census estimates.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

ARE PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP?

More than 76% said YES!



Willingness to implement change

Most survey participants who answered this question are willing to help financially and contribute their time to community improvements (46.99%), while 44.58% would contribute their time. More than 8% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially.

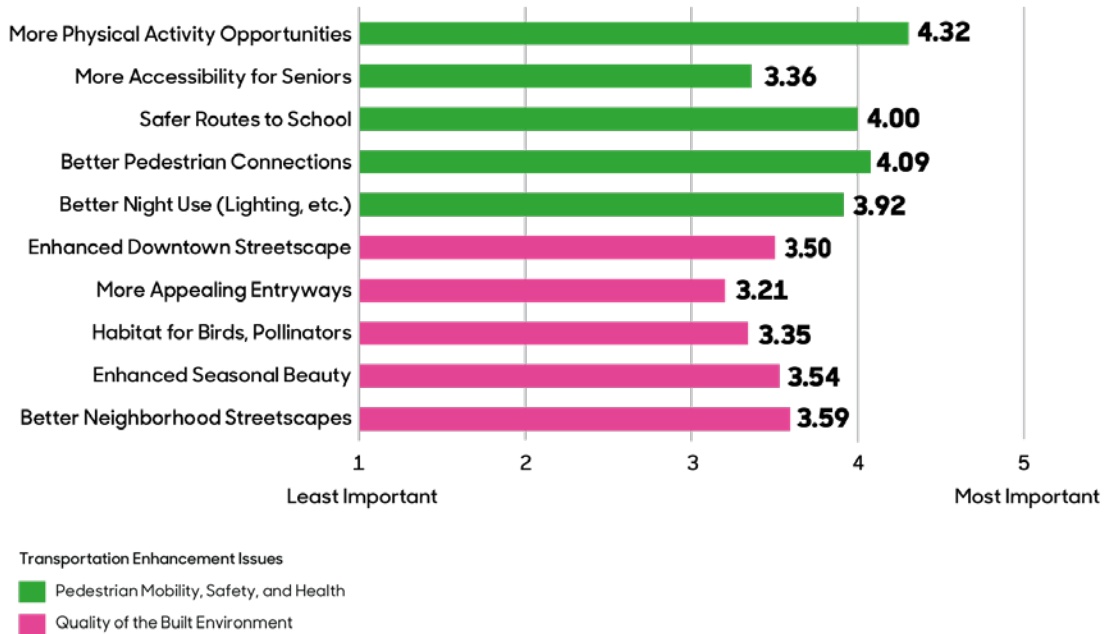
Compared to other small towns in Iowa, Van Meter residents are more willing to become involved in improving their community. In 2014, on average, 43% of residents in small, rural towns volunteered to help with a community project.¹ Van Meter exceeds this average by 33%.¹

How Do You Get People to Help?

In 2014, the most common reason residents in small-town Iowa said they didn't become involved in community projects is that no one asked them (34%). Twenty-eight percent on average said that they don't have time, which is significantly lower than the 2004 average of 59%. Sixteen percent indicated that they didn't know how to become involved, and 7% said that no community project needed volunteers.¹ These results indicate that the best ways to get people involved in community projects is to simply ask, along with advertising opportunities through traditional and social media outlets.

¹ *Sigma: A Profile of Iowa Small Towns 1994 to 2014* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2015).

WHAT TYPES OF ENHANCEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT? Mobility, Safety, and Health!



Importance of transportation enhancement by type (105 responses)

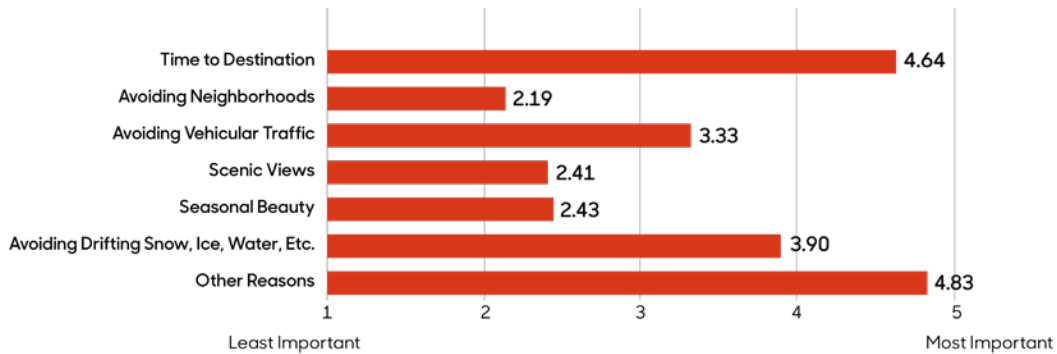
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Van Meter ranked creating more opportunities for physical activities as most important, with a mean value of 4.32. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as creating better pedestrian connections (4.09), safer routes to school (4.00), and better lighting for night use (3.92). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider better neighborhood streetscapes as most important (3.59), followed by enhanced seasonal beauty (3.54) and an enhanced downtown streetscape (3.50). These findings are consistent with the views expressed by focus group participants during the Transportation Assets and Barriers workshop held in March 2019.

How People Get To Work

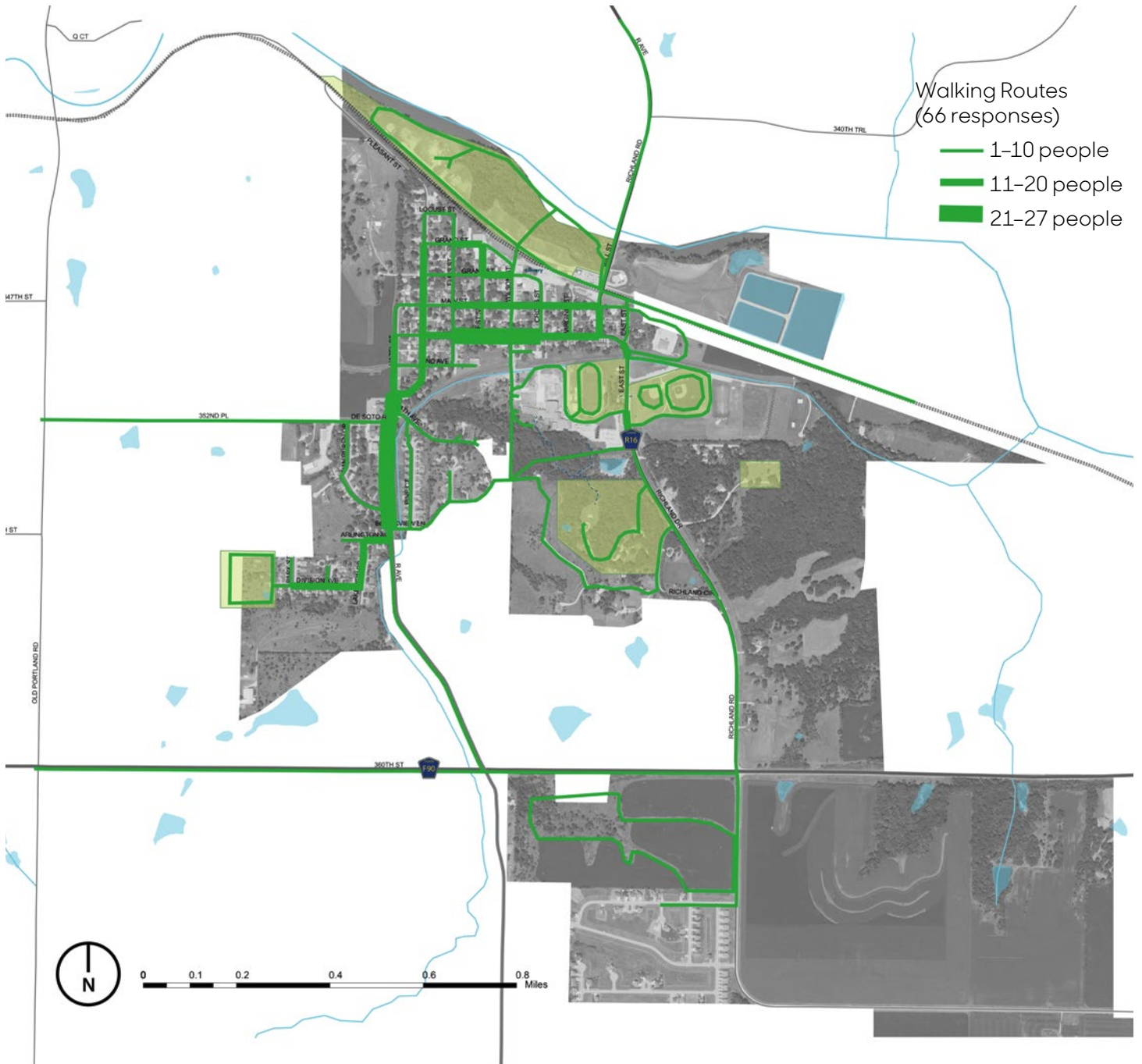
This map shows the commuting routes identified by 89 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The primary commuting corridor in Van Meter is County Road R16 to the north from East Street, presumably because many commuters use I-80 to get to the Des Moines Metro Area. Some people also travel south on R16 to connect to County Road F90 to go east or west. As the only access to the Crestview development, R16 south of F90 is heavily traveled, as is Hazel Street in the west part of town.

The circulation patterns that emerge when routes for biking, walking, and commuting are overlaid suggest suitable types of transportation enhancements. For example, where pedestrian and vehicular traffic intersect, such improvements could include creating better visibility, defining crossing points, or improving signage.

Why They Go That Way



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that factored into their choice of commuting route. Among Durant participants, other reasons such as the quality of the road, safe neighborhoods, coordinating multiple stops, and avoiding stoplights are the most important factors, with a mean value of 4.83, followed by time to destination (4.64). Avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice is also considered important, with a mean value of 3.90. Scenic views, seasonal beauty, and avoiding neighborhoods are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.

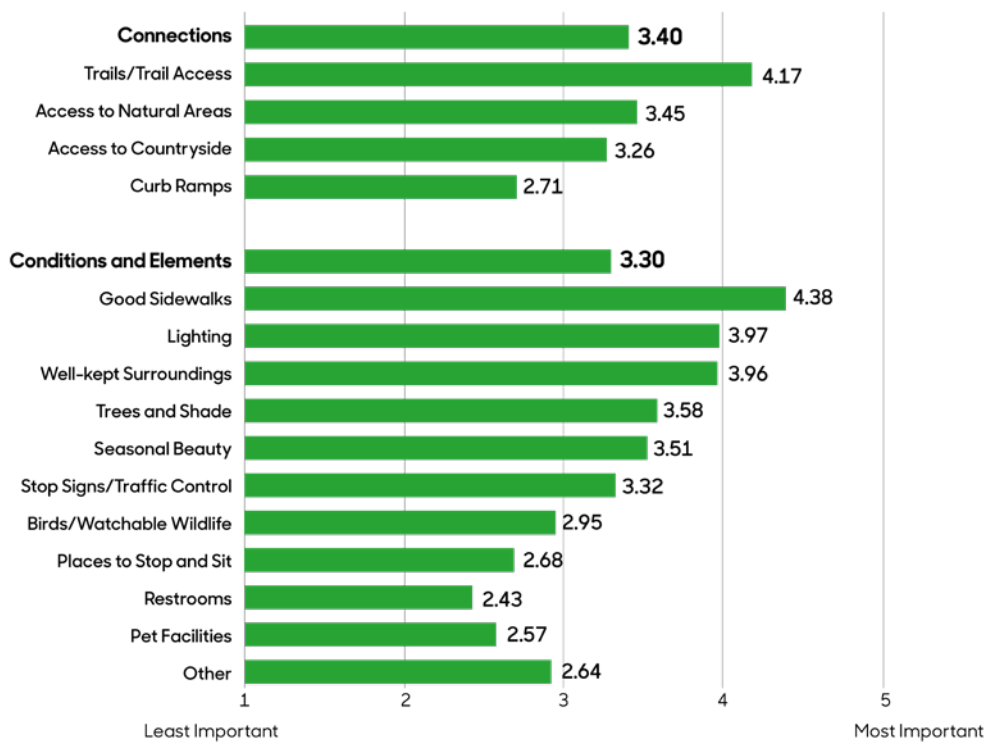


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislibx/>.

Where People Walk

This map shows the walking routes identified by 66 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. Survey respondents indicated that they walk primarily along the streets of Van Meter, with the most frequently walked streets in town being Elm and Hazel Streets. In addition, some people walk at the Van Meter Recreation Complex, Trindle Park, and Johnson Park. People also walk around the track at the football field and around the ball fields.

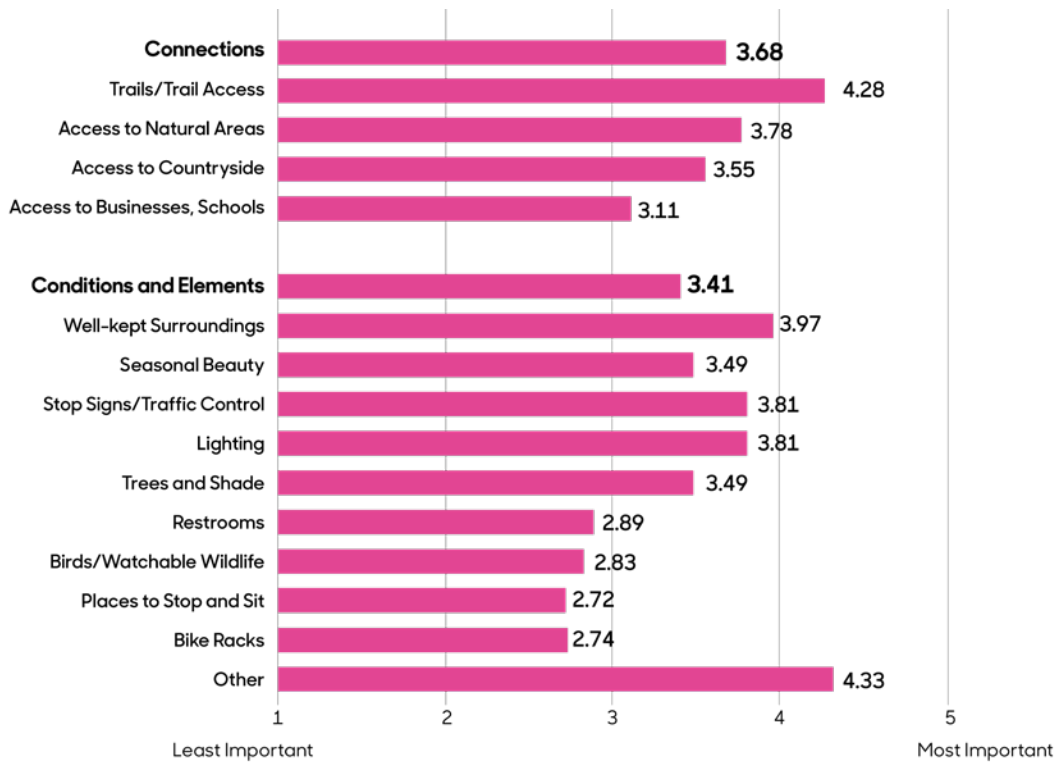
Why They Go That Way



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their walking experience better. These features are categorized as either “connections” or “conditions and elements.” Among Van Meter participants, connections are of somewhat more important than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.40 and 3.30, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.17. Good sidewalks (4.38) are the most important element to walkers, followed by well-kept surroundings (3.96) and lighting (3.97). Other significant factors include trees and shade (3.58) and seasonal beauty (3.51).

Desired Bike Route Features

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their biking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among Van Meter participants, connections are of somewhat more important than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.68 and 3.41, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.28. Other factors, such as paved surfaces rather than gravel, are the most important element to cyclists, with a mean value of 4.33. Well-kept surroundings (3.97), stop signs and traffic control (3.81), and lighting (3.81) are also important features.

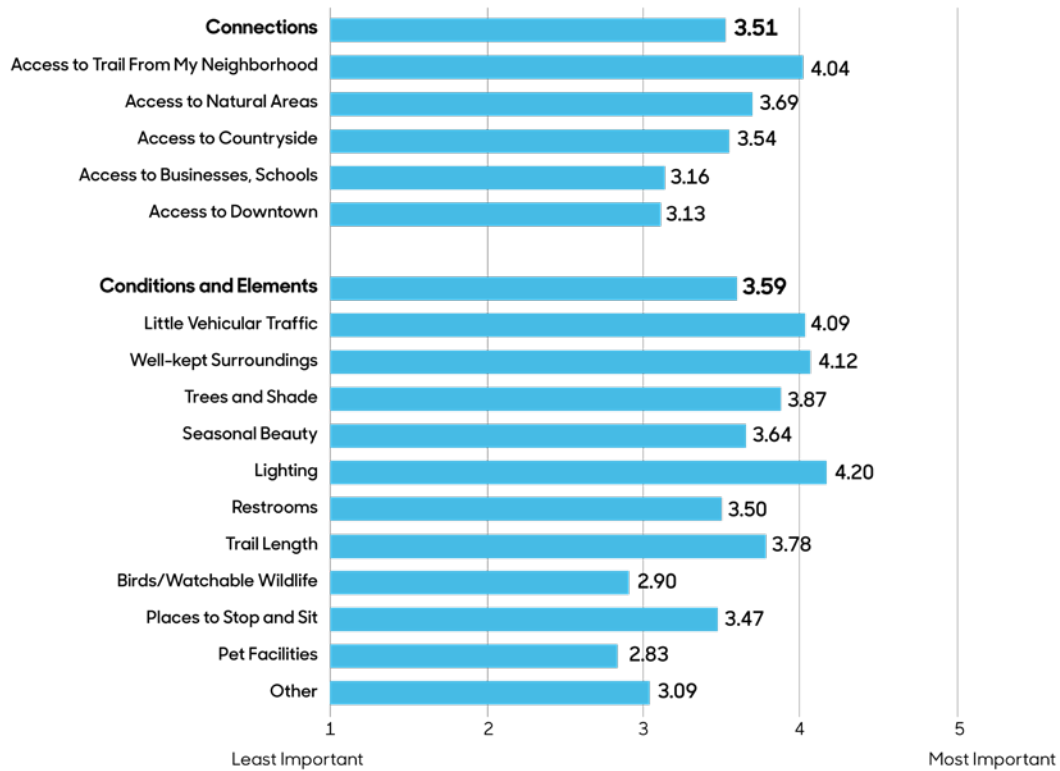


Desired Trail Features

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their trail experience better. Like the bike route features, they are categorized as either “connections” or “conditions and elements.” Conditions/elements are slightly more important to Van Meter trail users than



connections, with mean values of 3.59 and 3.51, respectively. In terms of conditions/elements, lighting (4.20) is the most important element, followed by well-kept surroundings (4.12), and little vehicular traffic (4.09). In terms of connections, access to the trail from their neighborhoods is considered most important, with a mean value of 4.04.



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a US veteran. Inquiries can be directed to the Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, 3210 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-7612.