



Iowa's Living Roadways

**community
visioning**

designing livable communities, 2020

Avoca, 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 and behaviors, needs and desires of Avoca residents. Surveys were mailed to 300 randomly selected residents living in Avoca 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 262. A total of 110 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 41.9%. (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.

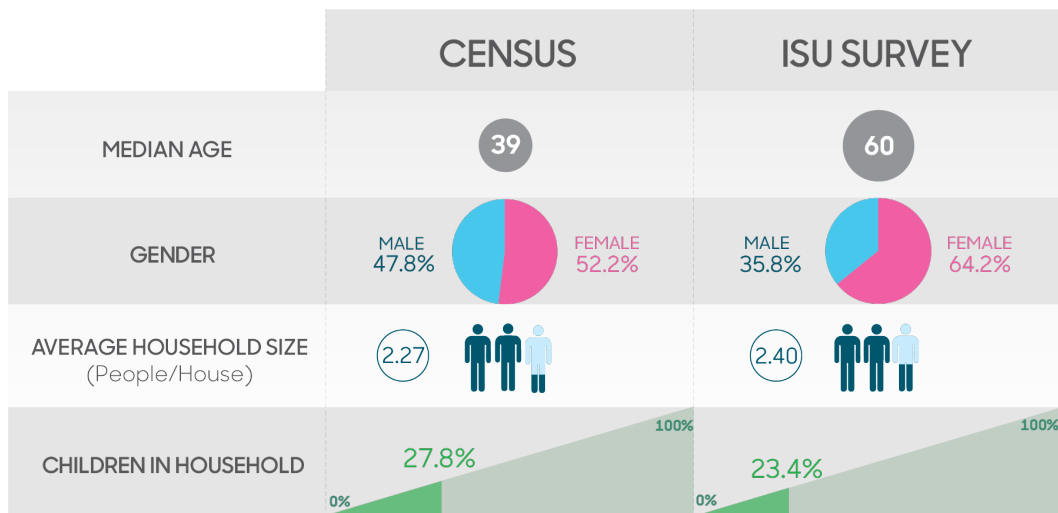
What Did We Find Out?

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 Avoca. 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?

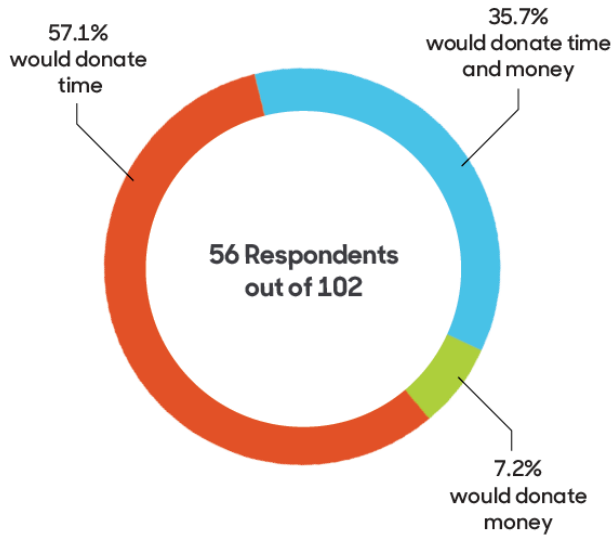
The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from those obtained from the 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate. For example, the survey respondents median age of 60 is significantly older than the 2019 estimated average age for Avoca residents of 39. In terms of gender, the percentage of female survey respondents is significantly higher than that of the census. Average household size of survey respondents is higher than the 2019 estimate. The percentage of households with children for survey respondents is lower than that of the census estimate..



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

ARE PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP?

More than 54% said YES!



Willingness to implement change

Most survey participants who answered this question are willing to contribute their time to community improvements (57.1%), while 35.7% would contribute their time and talent. More than 7% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially.

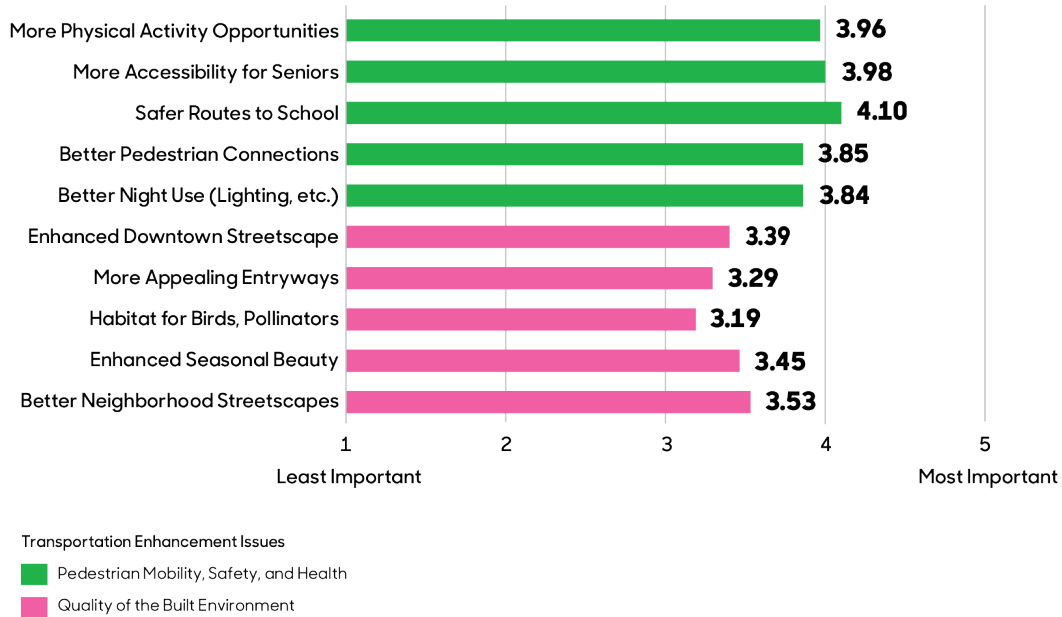
Compared to other small towns in Iowa, Avoca residents are more willing to become involved in improving their community. In 2014, on average, 43% of residents in small, rural towns volunteered to help with a community project.¹ Avoca exceeds this average by 11%.

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.

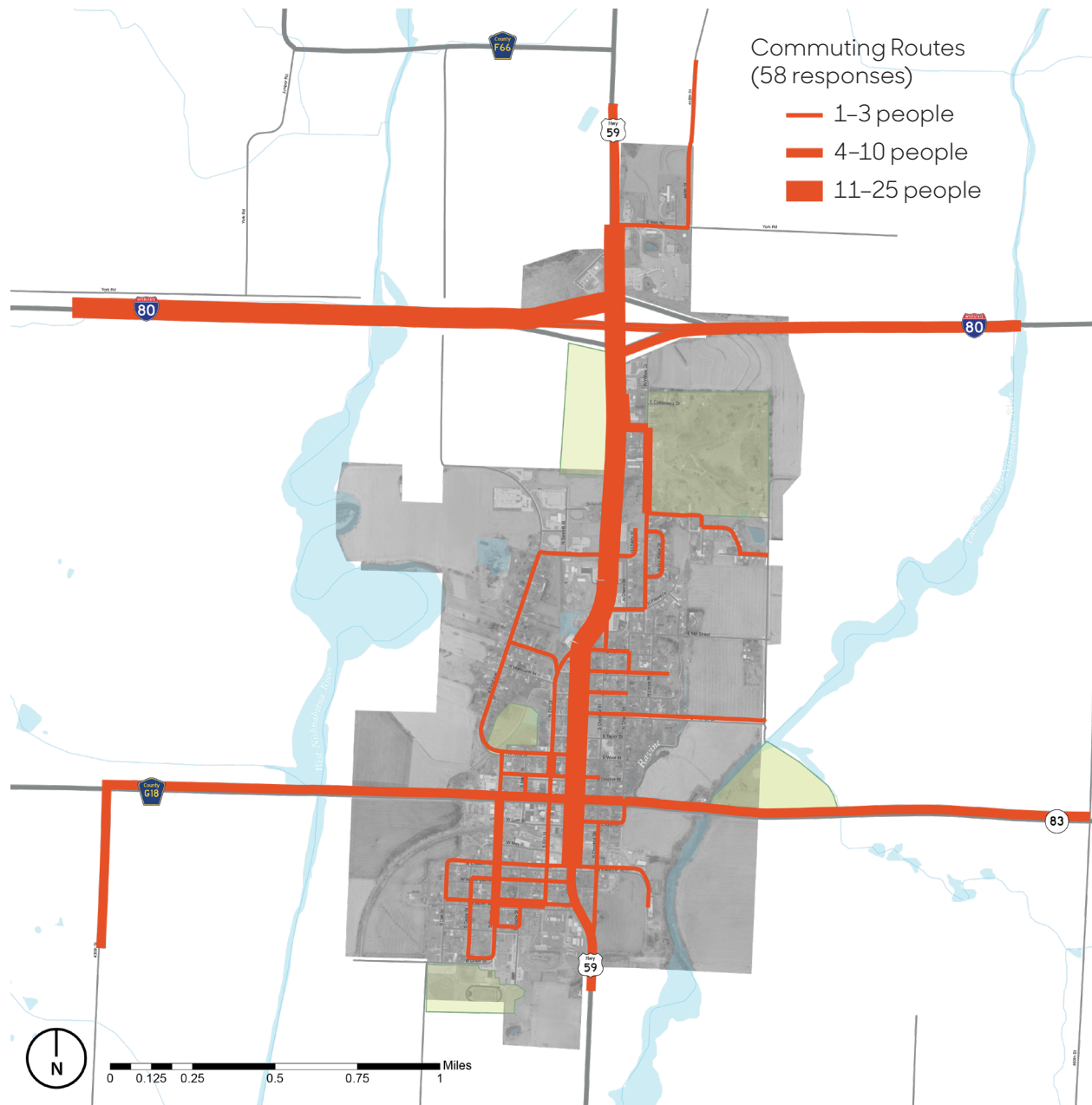
¹ *Sigma: A Profile of Iowa Small Towns 1994 to 2014* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2015).

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



Importance of transportation enhancement by type (102 responses)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Avoca ranked creating safer routes to school as most important, with a mean value of 4.10. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as providing more accessibility for seniors (3.98), creating more physical activity opportunities (3.96), and creating better pedestrian connections (3.85). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider better neighborhood streetscapes as most important (3.53), followed by enhanced seasonal beauty (3.45) and enhanced downtown streetscape (3.39).



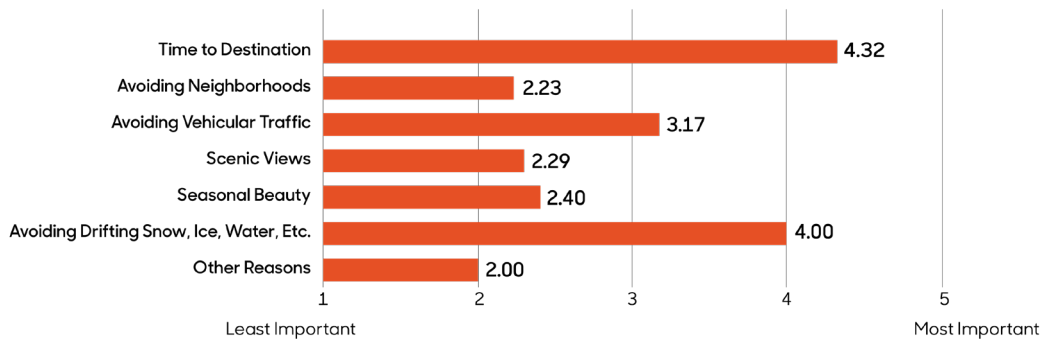
Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislibx/>.

How People Get To Work

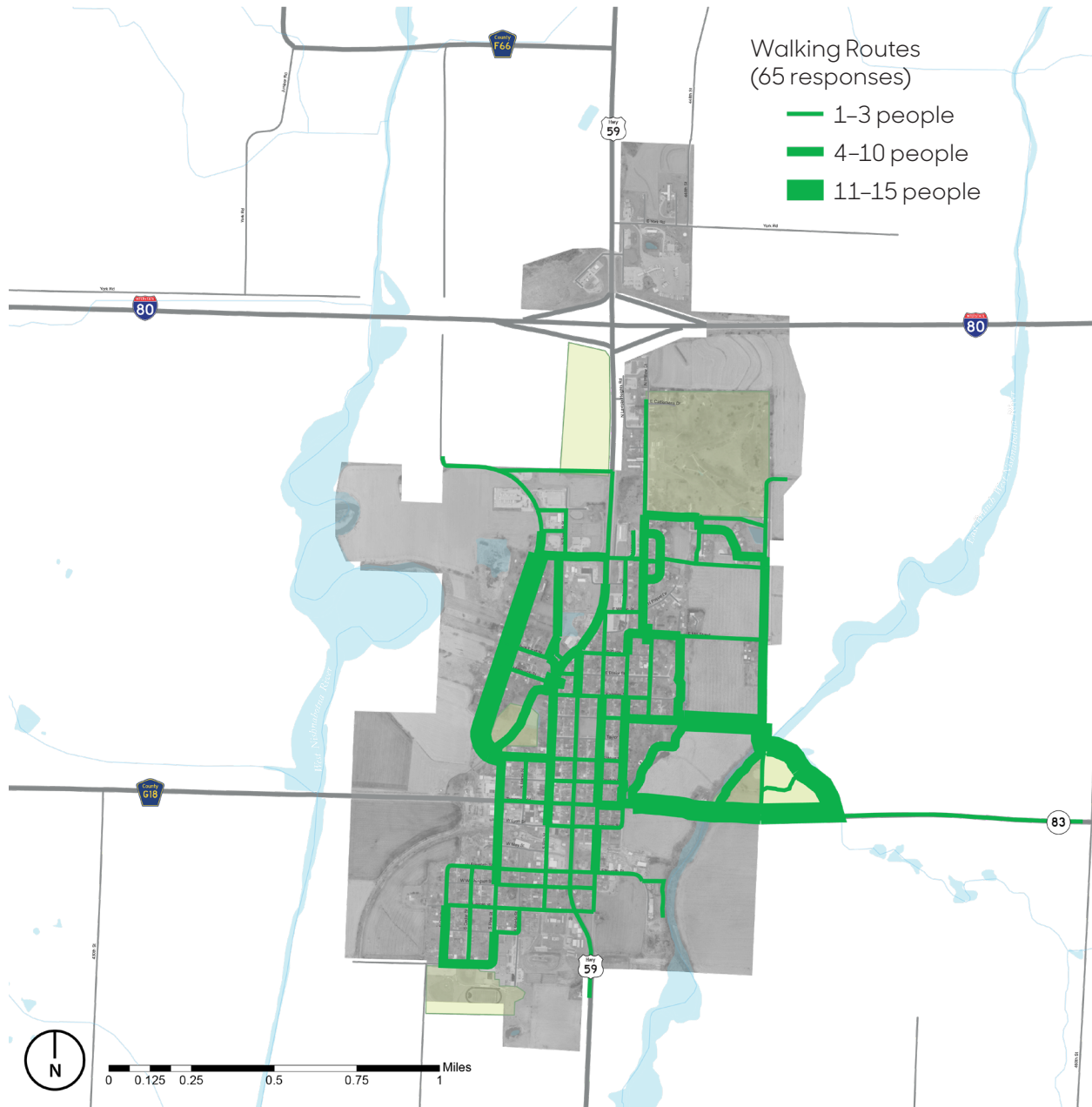
This map shows the commuting routes identified by 58 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The primary commuting corridor in Avoca is Highway 59 north-south. Most out-of-town commuters take Highway 59 to Interstate 80 West, presumably to the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro area. In addition to Highway 59 through town, commuters also travel north-south on Pine Street south of West High Street and Lavista Heights Road just south of the I-80 interchange.

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 Avoca participants, time to destinations is the most important factor, with a mean value of 4.32. Avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice (4.00) is the second most important factor determining commuting routes. Avoiding vehicular traffic is also considered somewhat important, with a mean value of 3.17. Scenic views, seasonal beauty, and avoiding neighborhoods are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.

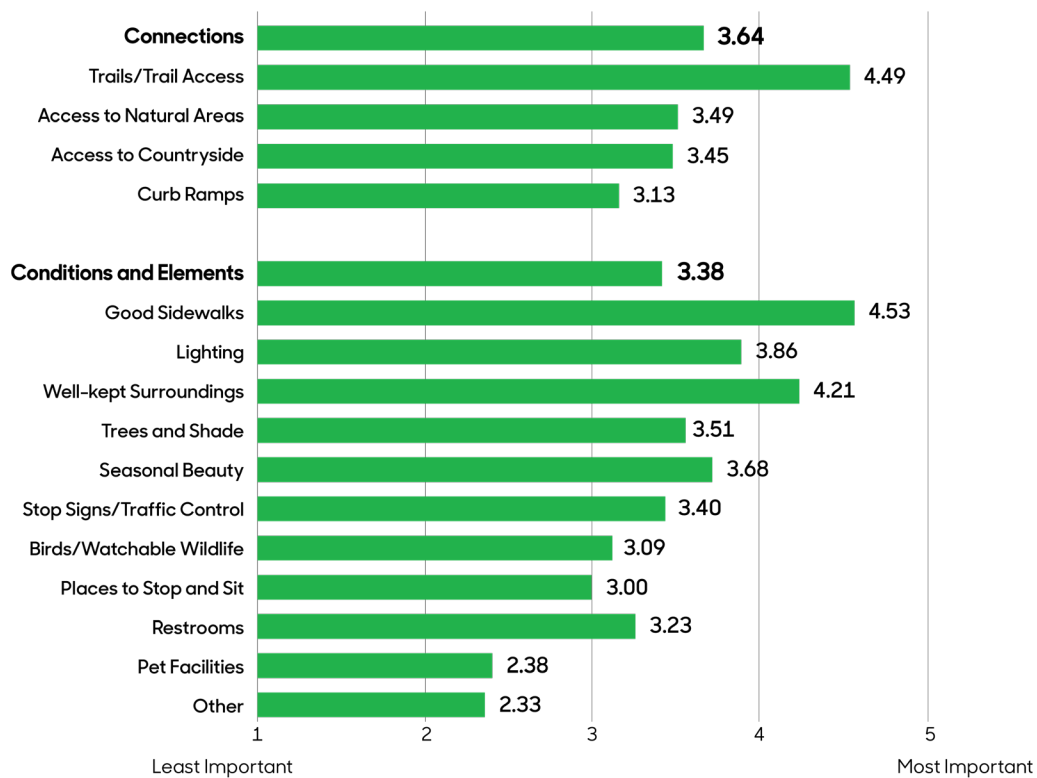


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislibx/>.

Where People Walk

This map shows the walking routes identified by 65 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 on the trails in Eddington Memorial Park, as well as along North Frost Avenue from Wool Street to Wood Street. East High Street and East Thomas Street, which connect to Eddington Memorial park, are also frequented by walkers. Walkers also take the trail adjacent to Mez Buttermilk Flat Park, North Walnut Street, and North Willow Street.

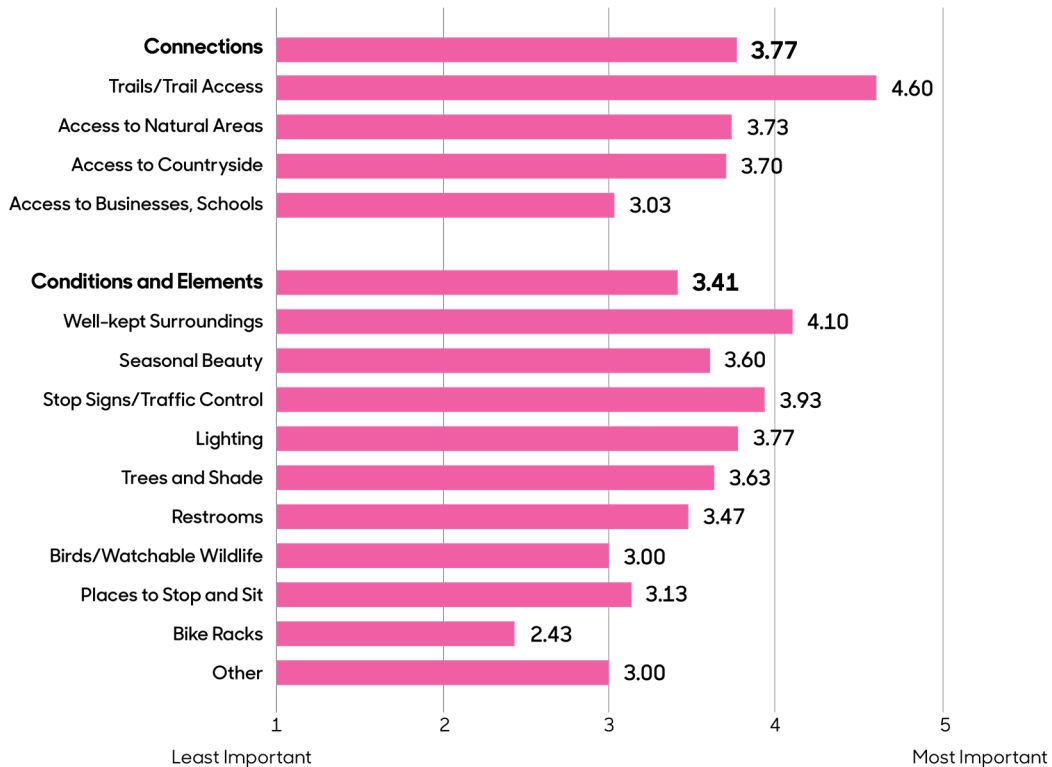
Why They Go That Way



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 Avoca participants, connections are more important than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.64 and 3.38, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.49. Good sidewalks (4.53) are the most important element to walkers, followed by well-kept surroundings (4.21). Other significant factors include lighting (3.86), seasonal beauty (3.68) and trees and shade (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 Avoca participants, connections are significantly more important than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.77 and 3.41, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.60. Well-kept surroundings are the most important element to cyclists, with a mean value of 4.10. Stop signs/traffic control (3.93), lighting (3.77), and trees and shade (3.63) are also important features.

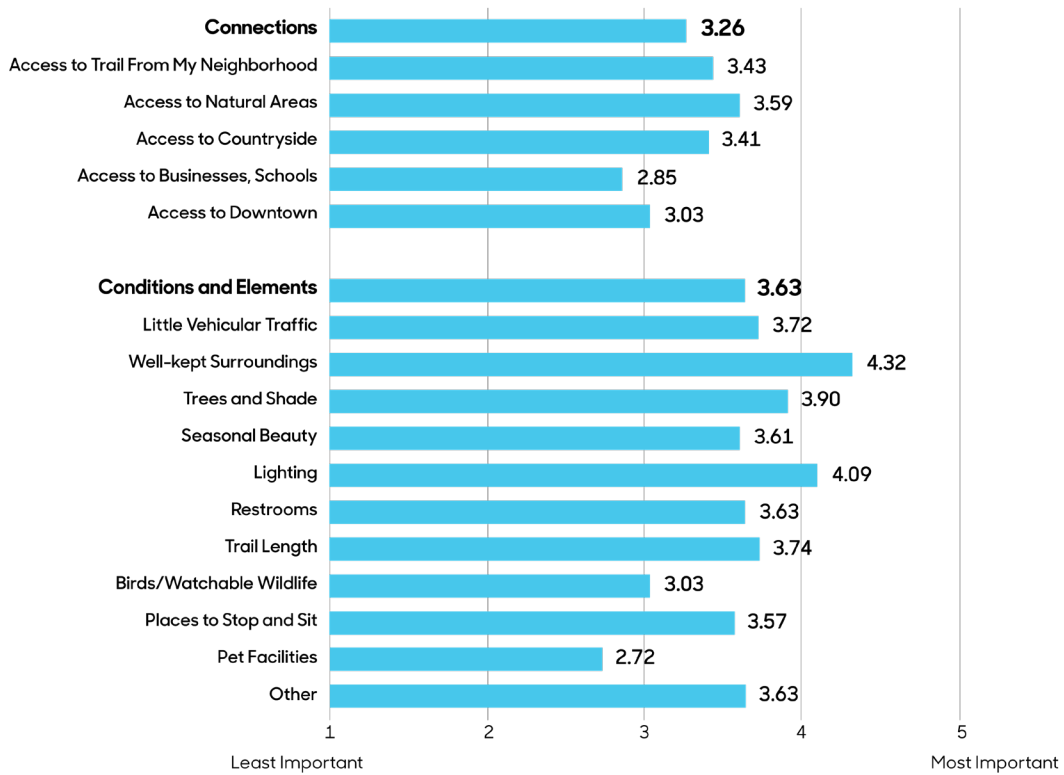


Desired Trail Features

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 and elements are more important to Avoca trail



users than connections, with mean values of 3.63 and 3.26, respectively. In terms of connections, access to natural areas is considered most important, with a mean value of 3.59. In terms of conditions/elements, well-kept surroundings (4.32) is the most important element, followed by lighting (4.09), and trees and shade (3.90). Another factor identified by trail users as important is trail maintenance (3.63).



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