



Iowa's Living Roadways

**community
visioning**

designing livable communities, 2019

Mount Pleasant, 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 Survey Research Services staff in the Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology (CSSM-SRS), ISU visioning program staff conducted a survey to better understand the transportation patterns, behaviors, needs, and desires of Mount Pleasant residents. Surveys were mailed to 300 randomly selected residents living in Mount Pleasant 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 81 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 30.9%. (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.

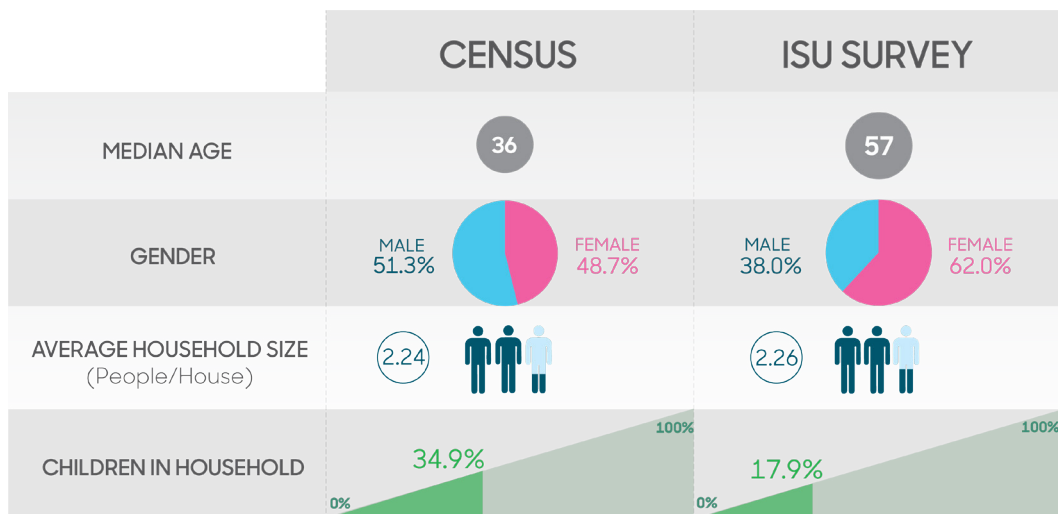
What Did We Find Out?

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 Mount Pleasant. 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?

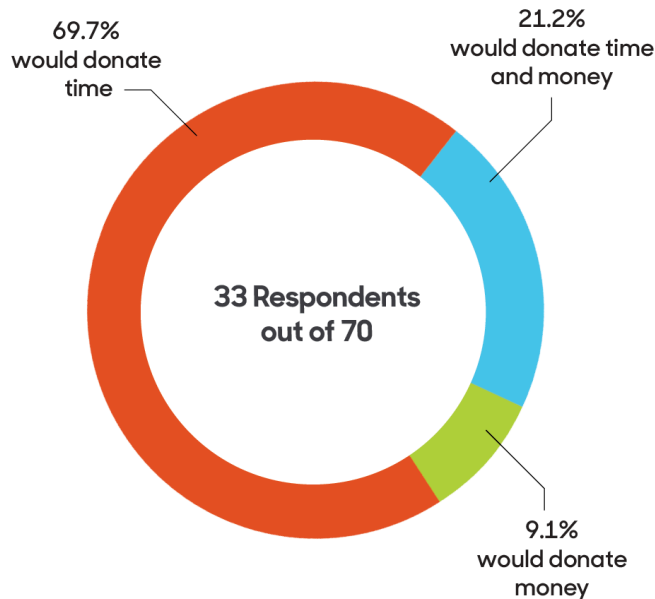
The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from those obtained from the 2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate. For example, the survey respondents median age of 57 is significantly older than the 2017 estimated average age for Mount Pleasant residents of 35.7. In terms of gender, the percentage of female survey respondents is significantly higher than that of the census. Average household size of survey respondents is slightly higher than the 2017 estimate, while number of children in the household among survey respondents is much lower.



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

ARE PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP?

More than 47% 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.

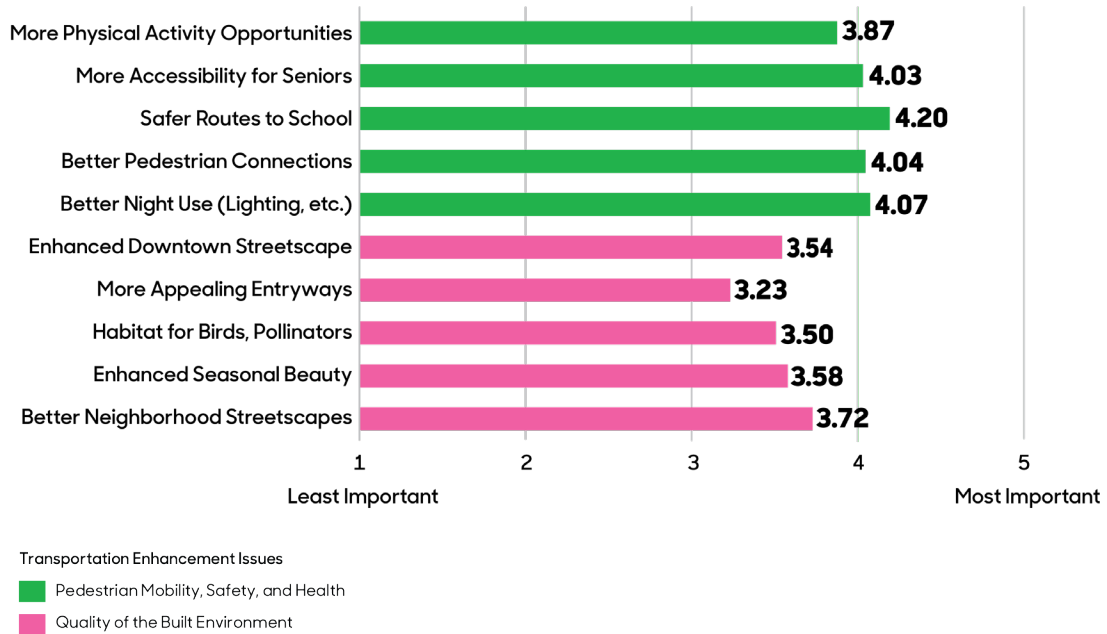
Compared to other small towns in Iowa, Mount Pleasant residents are more willing to become involved in improving their community. In 2014, on average, 43% of residents in small, rural towns volunteered to help with a community project. Mount Pleasant exceeds this average by 4%.¹

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.

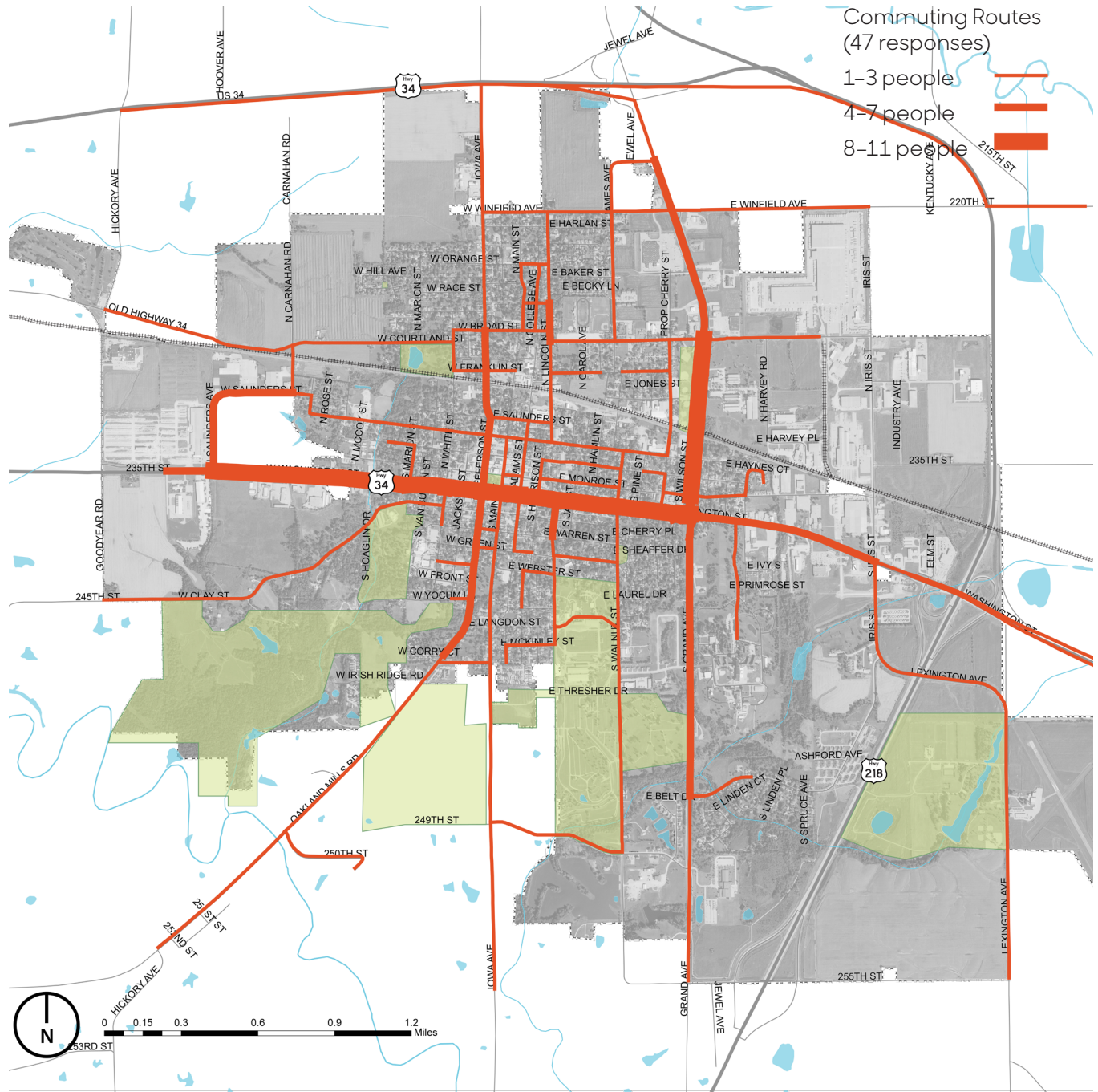
¹ *Sigma: A Profile of Iowa Small Towns 1994 to 2014* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2015).

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



Importance of transportation enhancement by type (63 responses)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Mount Pleasant ranked creating safer routes to school as most important, with a mean value of 4.20. Other types of transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as providing better lighting for night use (4.07), more accessibility for seniors (4.03), and better pedestrian connections (4.04). In terms of quality of the built environment, survey respondents consider better neighborhood streetscapes as most important (3.72), followed by enhanced seasonal beauty (3.58) and enhanced downtown streetscapes (3.54).



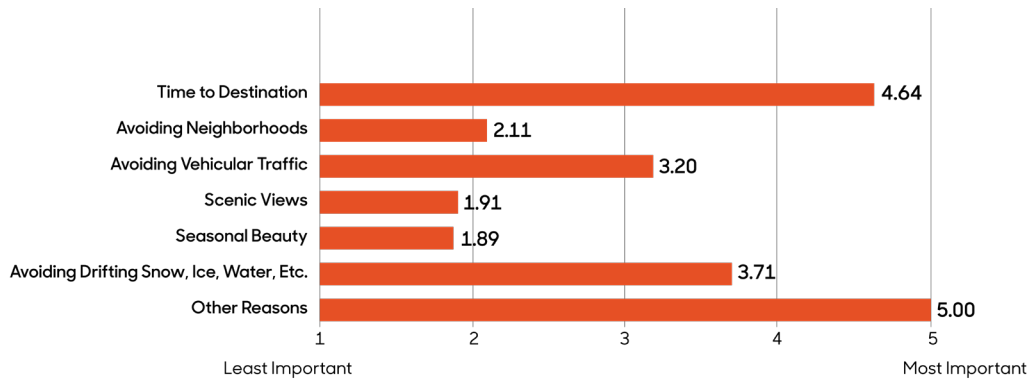
Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

How People Get To Work

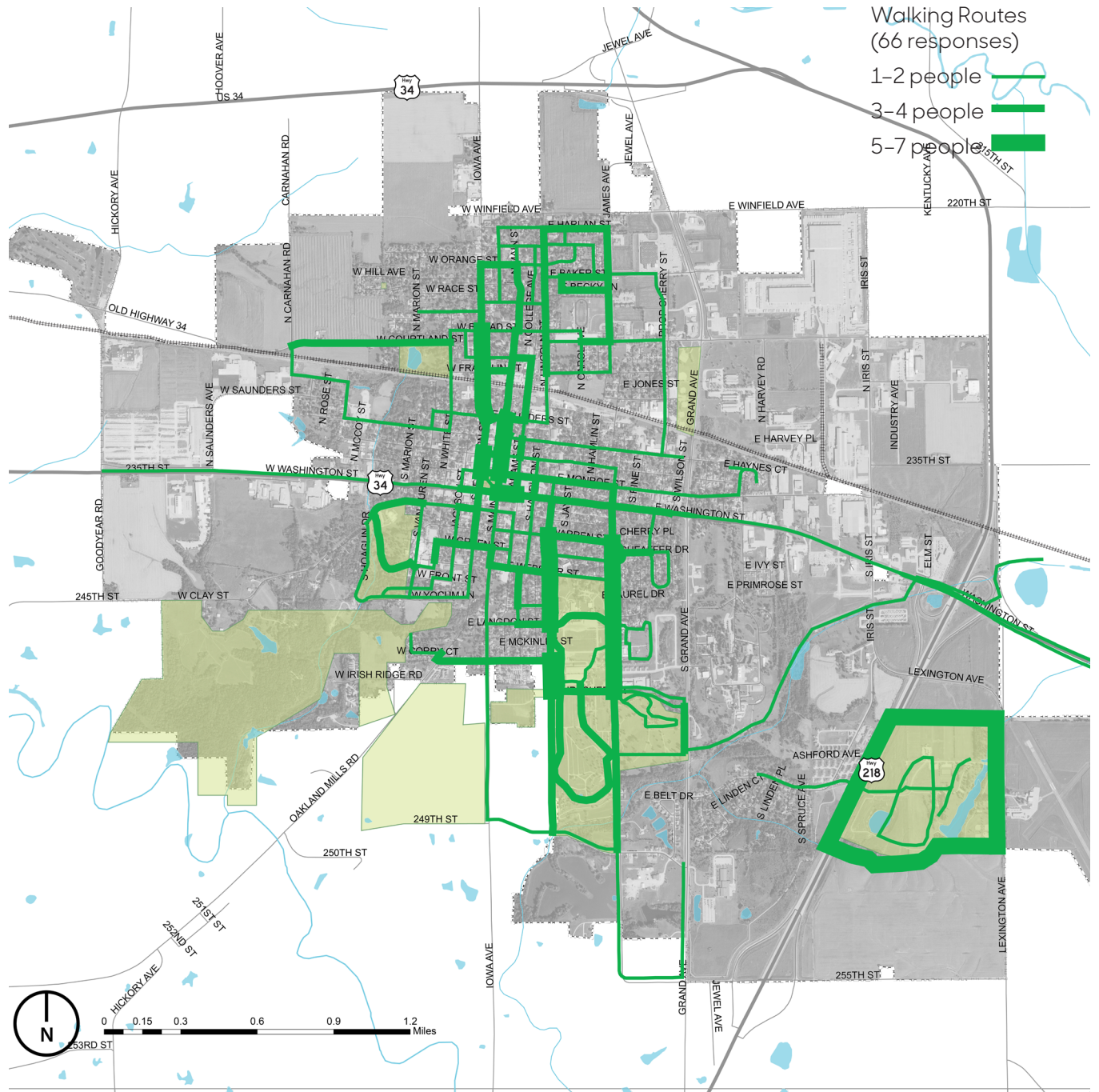
This map shows the commuting routes identified by 47 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The primary commuting corridor in Mount Pleasant is Highway 34 Business east and west. A number of people also travel north on North Grand Avenue, presumably to reach the Highway 34 interchange. In town, most of the city streets are used to get to work. Oakland Mills Road is a popular route into town from the south. Jefferson Street from West South Street to Broad Street is also a busy route.

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



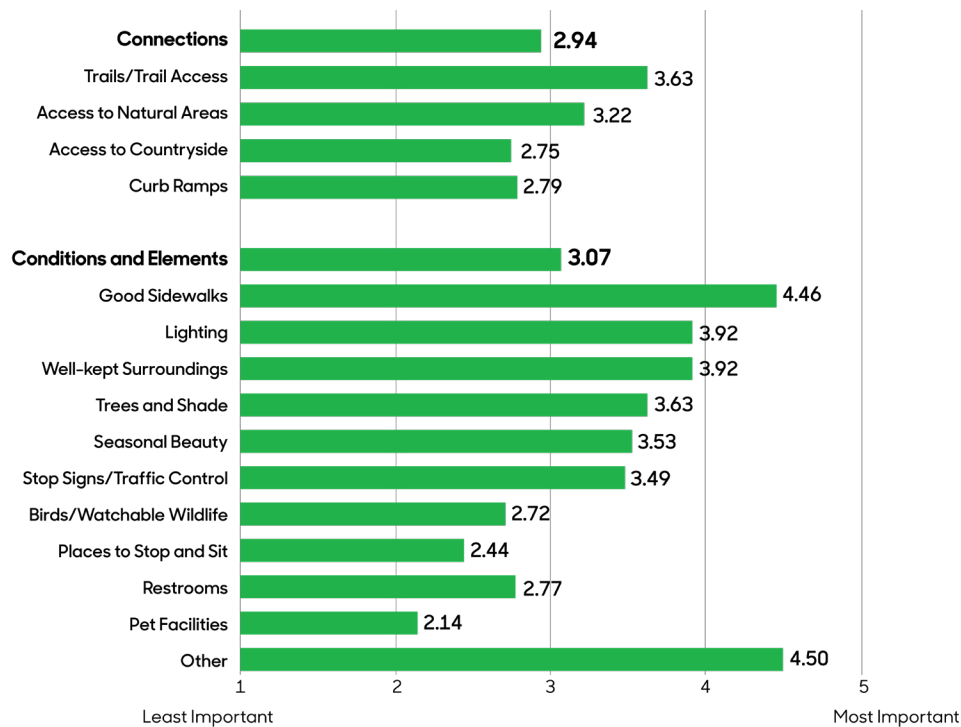
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that factored into their choice of commuting route. Among Mount Pleasant participants, other reasons, such as avoiding traffic lights, are the most important factors, with a mean value of 5.00. For those who walk to work, popular routes have passable sidewalks and vehicular traffic yields to pedestrians. Time to destination (4.64) is the second most important factor determining commuting routes. Avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice is also considered important, with a mean value of 3.71. Scenic views, seasonal beauty, and avoiding neighborhoods are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.



Where People Walk

This map shows the walking routes identified by 36 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their width, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The most frequently used routes among survey respondents are around the perimeter of East Lake Park and McMillan Park. People also walk in and around Forest Home Cemetery and Saunders Park. Streets in the vicinity of Central Park, Cranes Pond Park, and Iowa Wesleyan University are also popular routes.

Why They Go That Way



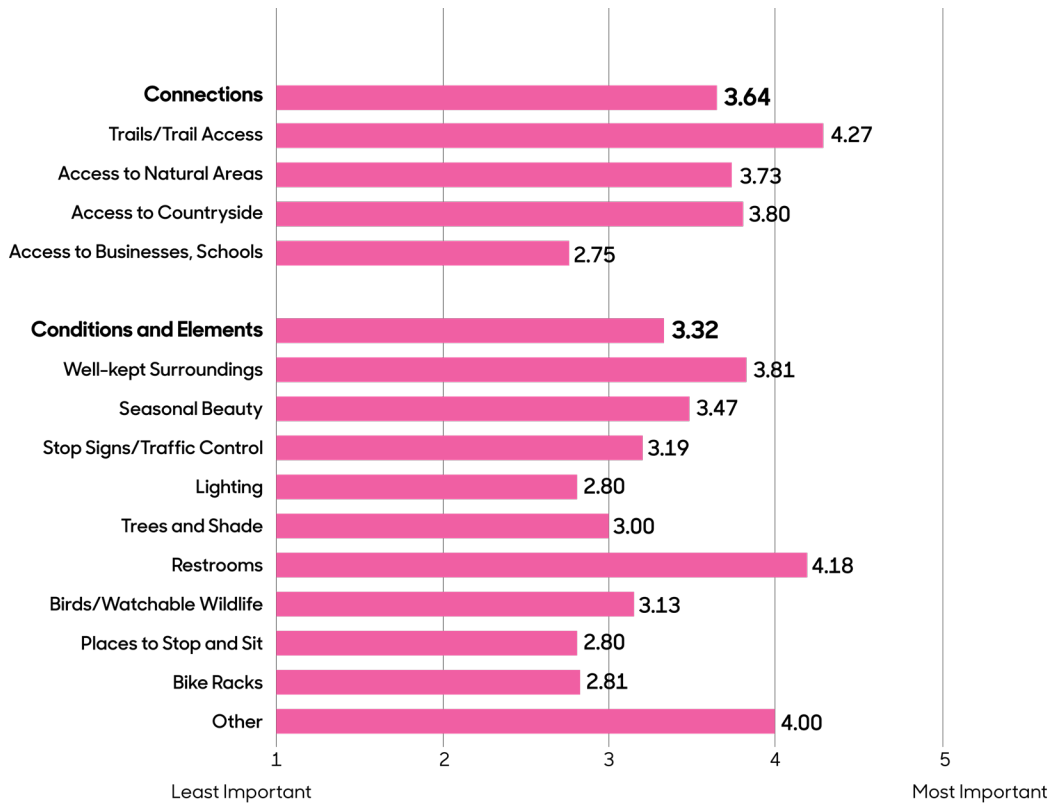
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their walking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among Mount Pleasant participants, conditions/elements are of somewhat more important than connections, with mean values of 3.07 and 2.94, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 3.63. Other factors such as quiet, low traffic, and crosswalks are most important to walkers with a mean value of 4.50. Good sidewalks (4.46) are the next most important element to walkers, followed by well-kept surroundings and lighting (3.92). Other significant factors include trees and shade (3.63) and seasonal beauty (3.53).

Desired Bike Route Features

Bike routes consist of roads, sidewalks, off-street trails, or anywhere one can ride a bike. 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 Mount Pleasant participants, connections are of more importance than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.64 and 3.24, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.27. Restrooms (4.18) are the most important element to cyclists, followed by other features (4.00), such as sidewalks and off-street trails. Well-kept surroundings (3.81) are also valued by trail users. Places to stop and sit and bike racks are less important elements.

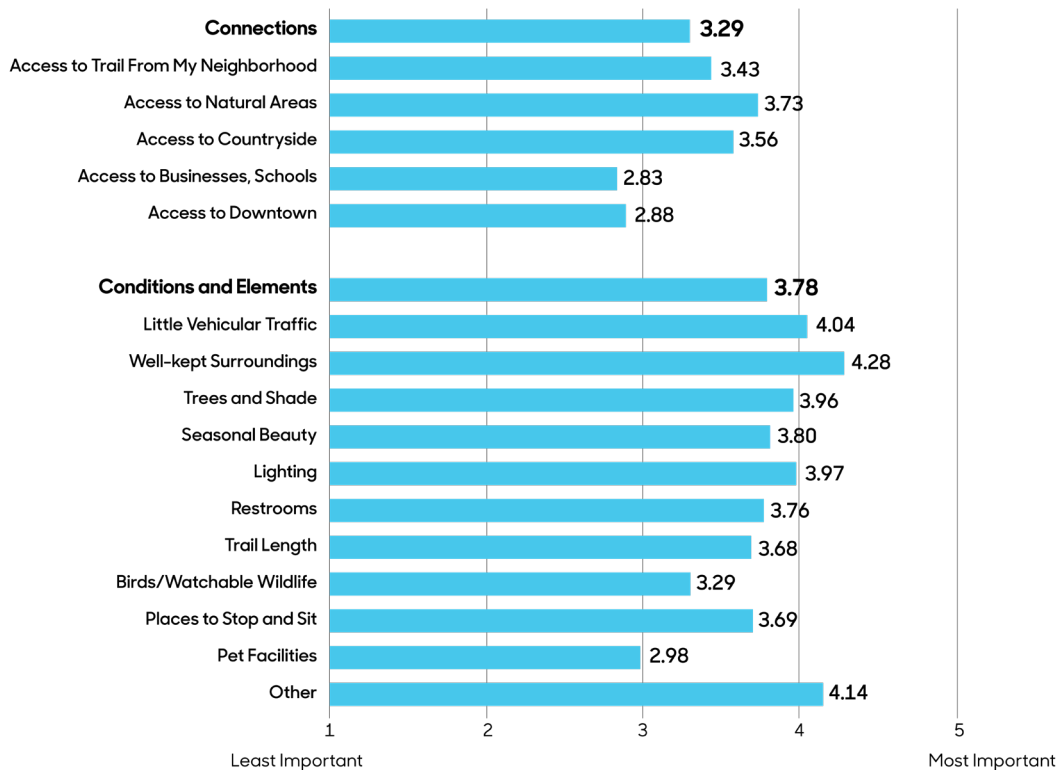


Desired Trail Features

Trails are off-street paths that are paved or unpaved and can be used by pedestrians and cyclists. 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 more important to Mount Pleasant trail users than connections, with mean values of 3.78 and 3.29, respectively. In terms of conditions/elements, well-kept surroundings (4.28) is the most important. Other features (4.14) such as ATV access, good sidewalks, connections to other trails, and parking are also valued. In terms of connections, access to natural areas is considered most important, with a mean value of 3.73.



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