WASECA VISION 2030

WASECA COMMUNITY VISION AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Waseca, Minnesota, USA
February 2018

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This report presents the community vision and action plan developed to create a strategic action plan for future development in Waseca, Minnesota. This report has been produced as part of a collaborative project of the Business & Entrepreneurial Support Team (B.E.S.T.) of Waseca County, the City of Waseca, Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce, Waseca County, the Waseca Mayo Clinic and Waseca Public Schools.

REPORT PREPARED BY:

future→iQ

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the Business and Entrepreneurial Support Team of Waseca County (B.E.S.T.) in collaboration with the City of Waseca, Waseca Chamber of Commerce, Waseca County, Mayo Clinic Health System-Waseca and Waseca Public Schools determined that it was critical for the greater Waseca Community to have a common vision and plan. Each of these organizations have their own strategic plans and objectives, but a shared vision is needed to better unify and coordinate efforts, enable better communication about what the community is and where it is going, and provide a unified voice for where the community needs to invest its resources to get to its preferred future. The Waseca Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan aims to provide that inspiration and guidance as well as a "Road Map" for implementation.

Waseca's shared vision and action plan gives a coherent voice to the aspirations of the community for the future.

The firms of Future iQ and LHB were contracted to facilitate the visioning and strategic planning for this project. Future iQ provided the logistical, engagement facilitation, data analysis, visualization and report production and LHB assisted with the valuable planning and content insight needed to produce a well-rounded process. First and foremost, the people of Waseca provided the community support and involvement that made this process a success.

The first half of this report reviews the benchmarking and community vision engagement processes that were used to build alignment around a common vision, priorities and planning strategies for the community. The second half details the implications of alignment and outlines strategic pillars and action areas that are the foundation of the Strategic Action Plan.

"Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare."

– Japanese Proverb

1.1   OPEN LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY, JULY 2017

To support and encourage participation in the community visioning process, the Waseca Vision 2030 Steering Committee issued the following Statement of Purpose to the community:

DISCOVER
waseca
WASECA VISION 2030

Dear Community Members,

Over the past year, the leaders of BEST of Waseca County have been asked two questions repeatedly: "Why are we doing this?" and, "Haven't we done this before?"

These questions refer to the "Waseca Vision 2030" project that is currently underway. Waseca Vision 2030 is an initiative of BEST of Waseca County, in partnership with Waseca Public Schools, Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce, Mayo Health Systems – Waseca, and the City of Waseca.

To answer the first question, we are doing this because it is critical for the future of Waseca. Our community is at a crossroad. We can either take control and identify our own future, or we can passively allow outside factors to determine what Waseca will be in 10, 20, or 30 years. In order take control, it is critical that we, as a community, determine what that future should look like. This process will assist our community in describing our shared vision, so everyone is working towards the same future.

As to the second question, no, we have not done this before. This process is not about deciding we are going to take one specific action, address one specific problem, or construct one specific building. Hundreds of decisions will be made in this community in the coming years that will impact what our future looks like. Some of these decisions might address a specific problem, but the reason for the visioning process is so that EVERY decision made helps us get closer to the vision we have for the community.

The Steering Committee for Waseca Vision 2030 is embarking on an extensive engagement effort to get feedback on plausible future scenarios for the community. While the result of this process will have specific deliverables and action items, that is not why we need your input. If the final vision for the Waseca community is not broadly supported by the community, decisions will be made to achieve a future that isn't what our residents want.

Providing your input and perspective in this effort won't just influence a decision for the next six months or a year, but will influence and define decisions impacting our community for the next decade. Have your voice help shape the future of our community.

Thank you.

1.2   COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

1.2.1   THE PERI-URBAN SPACE

In today's globalized world, scale matters. Building economic, political and financial strength through collaboration makes common sense. The concept of Waseca as part of greater arcs of innovation in the peri-urban spaces surrounding the Twin Cities, Rochester, Faribault and Owatonna play an important part of the visioning and strategic planning for the community of Waseca.

Waseca's location within the peri-urban space places it within the dynamic multi-functional arc of innovation surrounding the Twin Cities.

The city of Waseca is the county seat of Waseca County and has a population of 9,324. It is located at the intersection of US HWY 14 and MN State HWY 13. To the west 28 miles on Highway 14 is Mankato (population 41,044), to the east 15 miles is Owatonna (population 25,725) and to the south 56 miles is Rochester (population 112,225). Rochester is Minnesota's second largest population center, second to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area and only 72 miles from Waseca. Located within a 15-mile radius there are several smaller communities. In addition to being the county seat, Waseca is home to a Federal Correctional Institute campus and the University of Minnesota Southern Research and Outreach Center.

Zones of Influence for Waseca and Surrounding Regional Centers
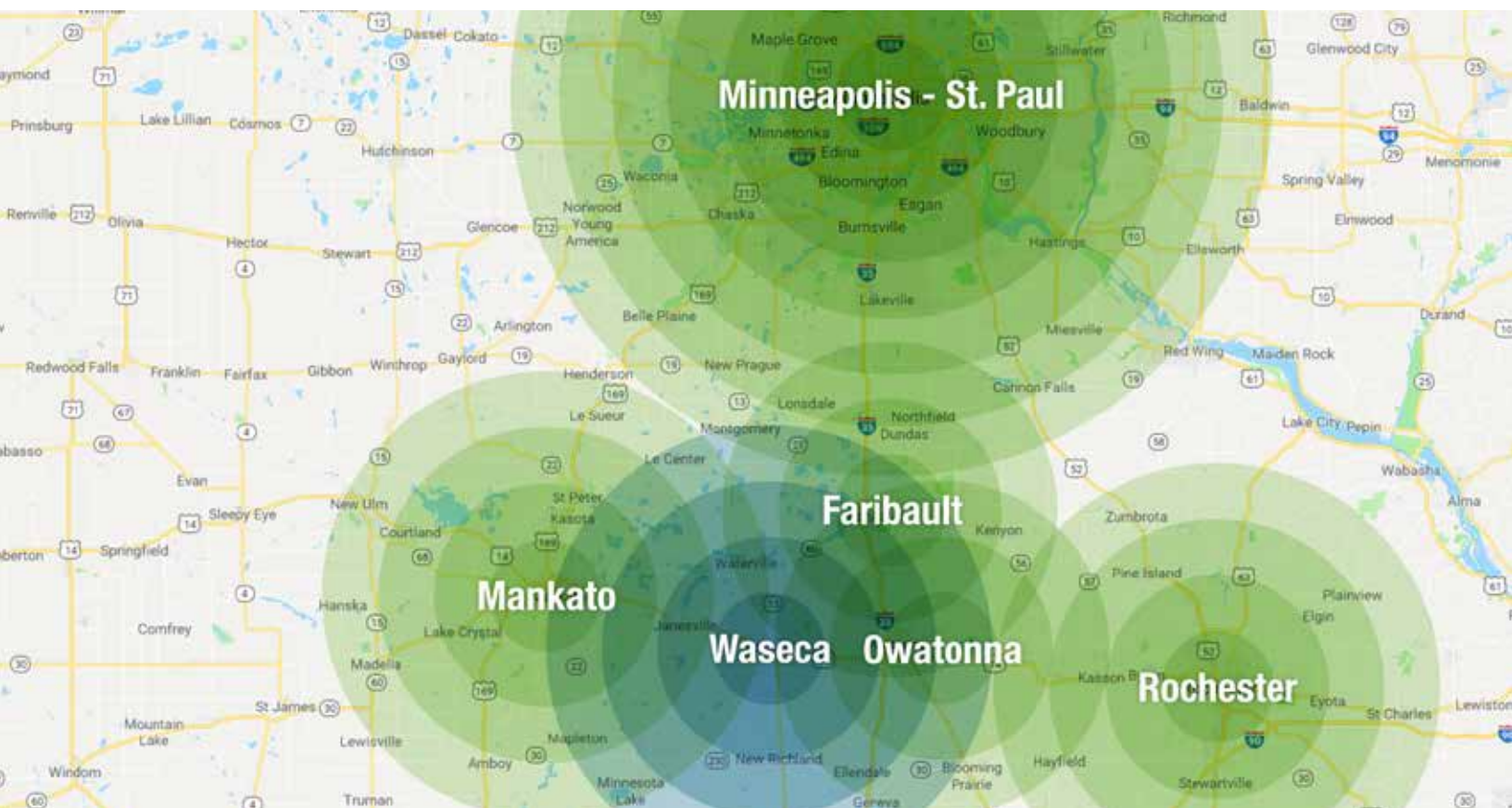
1.2.2   WASECA DEMOGRAPHICS

Taken from the Waseca Benchmark Analysis Report, the following chart shows historic and projected populations from 2000 to 2035 for Waseca and Waseca County. As of 2015 Waseca's population was 9,324 and its median age was 39.4, having steadily grown its population from 8,493 in 2000. Waseca is expected to maintain growth, with a projected population in 2035 to be 10,196. While Waseca grows steadily, the population of Waseca County has been declining steadily, from 19,526 people in 2000 to 19,076 in 2015, and 18,985 expected in 2035.

Figure 1. Historic and Projected Population, 2000-2035
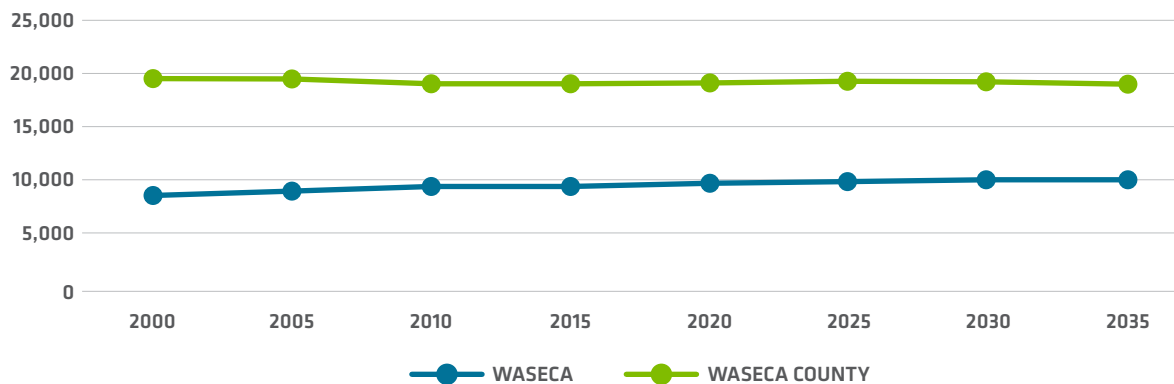
The chart below shows the age distribution of Waseca County observed in 2015 and projected in 2035. In 2015, 5-year age cohorts under 65 years old were each more than 5 percent of the population, and those 65 and upwards had less than 5 percent of the population each. In 2015, there were three modes in the population distribution at the 10-14 cohort, the 30-34 cohort, and the 55-59 cohort. In 2035, the population will be distributed more towards the elderly with 5-year age cohorts under 20 each accounting for only 4 percent of the population. The distribution modes shift towards increased ages as well, with modes at the 30-34 cohort, the 50-54 cohort, and the 75-79 cohort.

Figure 2. Population Distribution (%), 2015-2035, Waseca County
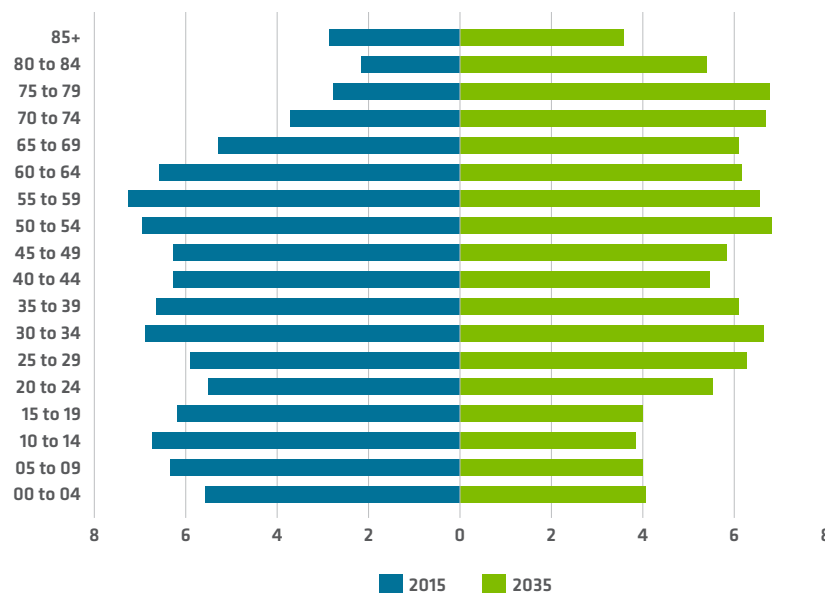
1.2.3   WASECA ECONOMICS

The data below summarizes the high-level economic and demographic attributes of Waseca. The Median income for individuals in Waseca is 28,782 dollars, 20 percent of the population earns less than 150 percent of the poverty line, and 62 percent of the population 16 and over is participating in the work force (labor force participation rate). There are two major industries in which Waseca's workforce is employed: 1) manufacturing, and 2) healthcare and social assistance. These two collectively account for 39 percent of the jobs for residents of Waseca County. Across industries, the major occupations of employment are in 1) production, 2) office and administrative support, and 3) management, business, and finance. Collectively, these occupation types account for 40 percent of the jobs for residents of Waseca County.

Table 1. Introduction to Waseca Demographics and Economics Summary

Population (2000)	8,493
Population (2015)	9,324
Projection Population (2035)	10,196
Median Age	39.4
Workforce Participation Rate	62%
Working in the County	69%
Median Income	$28,782
Population Below 150% of Poverty Line	20%
Major Industries (Waseca County)	Manufacturing
	Healthcare and Social Assistance
Major Occupations (Waseca County)	Production
	Office and Administration Support
	Management, Business, and Finance

Source: 2014 4-year, 2015 4-year American Community Survey

"There is energy in this community that makes progress possible."

– Community Member

1.3 BENCHMARK KEY FINDINGS

Future iQ, in conjunction with Waseca Vision 2030 Steering Committee members, identified five similar and slightly aspirational communities to create a Benchmark Analysis Report. The purpose of the report was to provide valuable insight into Waseca and how it relates to other similarly situated communities as it went through the community visioning and strategic planning process. The benchmark communities were: 1) Elkhorn, Wisconsin, 2) Fairmont, Minnesota, 3) Hutchinson, Minnesota, 4) Newton, Iowa, and 5) St. Peter, Minnesota. Below are the key findings that emerged from the Benchmark Analysis.

- Waseca is projected to experience slow population growth going forward, from the estimated 2015 population of 9,324 to 10,196 in 2035. At the same time the population age distribution is expected to shift towards older years.

- The population in Waseca is less racially diverse than Minnesota or the US, but is the most diverse of the benchmark communities with a Hispanic and Latino population similar to other benchmark communities and a larger Black or African American population.

- The population 25 years and older of St. Peter, MN, the US, and Minnesota share a similar educational attainment profile. The remaining communities including Waseca are less highly educated. Waseca and Elkhorn, WI are unique in having a high proportion of the population with some college and no degree.

- The median household income in Waseca is low relative to the benchmark communities, Minnesota, and the US. The labor force participation rate is slightly less than the US and much less than Minnesota.

- Waseca has a high proportion of employment in industries like 1) agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining, 2) manufacturing, and 3) healthcare and social assistance. This highly focused economy is similarly represented in the benchmark communities.

To see the complete Benchmark Analysis Report, please visit: http://future-iq.com/project/waseca-county-minnesota-usa-2017/

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WASECA COMMUNITY PROFILE AND BENCHMARK ANALYSIS
WASECA, MINNESOTA USA
April, 2017

2.0   ACTION PLANNING PROCESS TIMELINE

The overall Action Planning Process developed for Waseca during 2017 included several major principles:

- **Future Oriented**. The objective was to 'peer' into the future and design a process that draws together strategic foresight and identification of preferred future outcomes in Waseca.

- **People Focused**. The process aimed to offer maximum opportunity for local stakeholders and community members to engage in meaningful and thoughtful discussion about the future. A series of workshops and surveys were conducted to provide structured input.

- **Data Driven**. The planning work was underpinned by extensive analysis of community dynamics and surveying of stakeholders and community members.

The following reports have been prepared as part of the Waseca Community Vision and Strategic Action Planning process:

- *Waseca Vision 2030 Benchmark Analysis Report*
- *Waseca Vision 2030 Scenario-Planning Think Tank Report*
- *Waseca Vision 2030 Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan Report*

The Waseca community visioning and strategic planning process took place over the course of 12 months, from March 2017 to February 2018.

Timeline for the Waseca community vision and strategic planning process

Initial phone meetings with Advisory Committee	Formation and first meeting of Steering Committee	Scenario-Planning Think Tank Workshop	Extensive Community Visioning Workshop Sessions	Extensive Community Visioning Workshop Sessions	Think Tank Reconvene Meeting	Action Plan Focus Group Meeting, November	Elected Officials Focus Group on Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan

March - April 2017	May 2017	June - September 2017	September/October 2017	November/December 2017	January/February 2018

Waseca Benchmark Analysis Report	Waseca Scenario-Planning Think Tank Report	Waseca Vision 2030 Plausible Future Scenarios Engagement Brochure	Waseca Community Surveys	Waseca Community Surveys	Waseca Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan Report

3.0   COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

The community engagement analysis section of this report represents an overview of the opinions of Waseca stakeholders and community members regarding Waseca's future and their thoughts about what should be done to achieve Waseca's preferred future. This analysis outlines the community engagement process and provides a compilation of findings and conclusions that are used to support the development of the Waseca Strategic Action Plan.

3.1   APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Future iQ and LHB used a people-focused community engagement approach that emphasizes broad and deep participatory engagement methods to create collaborative environments that produce aligned visions of the future. For this project, various engagement methods were used including meetings and interviews, focus groups, a think tank, an online survey, a hard copy survey, and data visualization. In addition, B.E.S.T. of Waseca County created an information website for community members (http://wasecavision2030.com) and Future iQ hosted an online project webpage (http://future-iq.com/project/waseca-county-minnesota-usa-2017/) and interactive Lab Portal for the project at http://lab.future-iq.com/waseca-vision-2030/.

The Waseca Vision 2030 Steering Committee played a crucial role in the engagement process not only by outreach to community members, but also by hosting and facilitating many of the visioning workshop sessions.

3.1.1   INITIAL MEETINGS AND FORMATION OF STEERING COMMITTEE

This project began in March 2017 with regular phone meetings between Future iQ and LHB staff and the Waseca Vision 2030 Advisory Committee members. A Steering Committee was formed by an application process facilitated by the Advisory Committee, and the first gathering of the Steering Committee was held on April 25, 2017 following the Waseca Spring Business Summit. At that meeting, committee member roles and responsibilities, as well as a date for the Think Tank were determined.

3.1.2   PRE-THINK TANK SURVEY

Prior to the Think Tank, a Pre-Think Tank survey consisting of 12 questions was sent to all participants invited to attend the Waseca Vision 2030 Scenario-Planning Think Tank workshop. The goal of the survey was to understand the participants' vision for Waseca and to serve as a baseline for creating the axes of the scenario matrix. The survey collected responses from 78 people. Most significant was the high level of importance placed on having a shared community vision for Waseca. This importance was further validated by the community surveys and is explored in the Key Findings section below.

3.1.3   WASECA VISION 2030 THINK TANK

The Waseca Vision 2030 Think Tank was held on May 25, 2017, and was a key in-person participatory engagement event for this project. Future iQ uses the Think-Tank to bring key community members and stakeholders together to build an aligned vision for the future. The Waseca Vision 2030 Think Tank was a five-hour workshop where approximately 60 individuals – Waseca stakeholders, community members, council members and city staff – took a deep dive into Waseca's future.

The high level of community engagement throughout the visioning project is a testament to the dedication and commitment of the Waseca community to define its future.

The workshop program included:

- Playing the experiential planning process game, the Future Game
- Review of important trends and background research
- Development of detailed narratives and descriptions of potential future scenarios for Waseca
- Examining the impact and consequences of potential decision making paths for Waseca
- Identifying expected and preferred futures
- Exploring alignment around a shared future vision for Waseca

Detailed information on the Waseca Vision 2030 Think Tank can be found in the Waseca Vision 2030 Scenario-Based Think Tank Workshop Report at http://future-iq.com/project/waseca-county-minnesota-usa-2017/.

"Determine that the thing can and shall be done and then we shall find the way."
– Abraham Lincoln

3.1.4 COMMUNITY VISION ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP SESSIONS

In order to build a strategic action plan that is supported by stakeholders, leadership and the broader community, B.E.S.T. of Waseca County embarked on an intensive participatory community engagement process involving meetings, an online pre-Think Tank survey, a Think Tank, community workshops, focus groups and an in-depth community survey. This engagement was intended to create the foundation of support upon which a more targeted strategic action plan could be developed to guide the Waseca community over the next decade.

The engagement workshops attempted to reach a broad spectrum of community members. The sessions ranged from private sessions hosted by employers, to open public sessions at libraries and churches, as well as a session at the Federal correctional institution. Future iQ also spent a full day with all Waseca high school seniors in six separate social studies classes. Specific dates and types of engagement were as follows:

Date (2017)	Engagement
25 April	Initial introduction of the project to the business community at the Fall Waseca Business Summit / Initial Steering Committee meeting
17-25 May	Waseca Vision 2030 Pre-Think Tank Survey
25 May	Waseca Vision 2030 Scenario-Planning Think Tank Workshop
12-16 July	Waseca County Free Fair – promotional booth w/brochure
9 August	AM and PM Open Public workshops at City Hall / Facilitator Training Session
10 August	AM and PM Open Public workshops at City Hall/Public Safety Bldgs
17 August	Faith United Methodist Church / Grace Lutheran Church
21 August	Waseca Public Library / Cassie's Classic Cuts
28 August	Business After Hours – Public Safety Building
2 September	Waseca Public Schools – Teacher & Staff In-Service
11 September	Waseca High School – All High School Seniors (6 classes)
12 September	Rotary / AM and PM Open Public workshops at Public Safety Building
24 September	Bomgaars Quarterly Staff Meeting
29 September	Reconvene Think Tank – Focus Group
October	Federal Correctional Institution
16 October	Strategic Action Planning Focus Group
1 November	Presentation of Community Engagement results at the Waseca Fall Business Summit
12 December	Focus Group on Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan with elected officials from the City of Waseca, Waseca County and School District

"Great idea for this community. Getting citizen engagement is key to having this vision be successful."

– Waseca Community Member

3.1.5 DATA COLLECTION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

In addition to the in-person engagement activities, a Community Engagement Survey was prepared and distributed to all engagement participants to allow for additional broad based participation into the process. In all cases, expertly designed survey instruments captured stakeholder and community member perspectives, visions and priorities. The surveys examined appetite for change, and sensitivity to a range of future shaping themes, identified in the initial meetings and Think Tank. In addition to the quantitative analysis, each Community Engagement Survey was accompanied by an open-ended response section. The qualitative responses have been analyzed, allowing us to explore stakeholder and community member perspectives more deeply on key issues or topics and are included in the key findings.

The results of the community engagement survey securely provide a robust dataset that supports the community vision.

A total of 567 community surveys were collected and compiled. The results of the surveys will be further explored in the Community Engagement Survey Results (Section 3.3) of this report and may be seen in further detail on the Future iQ Lab Portal at http://lab.future-iq.com/waseca-vision-2030/data-visualization/about-the-survey/.

"Engagement in visioning for the future is exciting!"

– Survey Respondent

DataInsight

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- In total 567 surveys were taken. This represents a phenomenal data set, revealing deep insights into the community members' perspectives on key issues.

- The distribution of surveys reflects the demographic profile of the community, giving confidence that the results are representative.

3.2   SCENARIO PLANNING OUTCOMES

3.2.1   SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE

Beginning in May 2017, the Waseca visioning process used a scenario-based strategic planning methodology to arrive at a preferred future for Waseca. Scenarios are not predictions, but are a way of exploring plausible futures. The methodology expands on traditional strategic planning in that it allows the exploration of many factors, or drivers of the future at the same time. This is done by using local knowledge and expectations about the drivers to produce a framework that defines and explores a range of plausible futures. This enables people to explore the impacts and consequences of a range of different future paths as they seek a preferred future.

The scenario planning approach to strategic planning allowed the Waseca community to tackle issues and questions of importance in an engaging and supportive environment.

The scenario-based approach to strategic planning has significant advantages including:

- It allows community members choice, and the chance to engage with a series of well thought out and researched plausible futures. This accelerates the process of visioning and planning, and allows people to consider longer-term choices and implications, rather than short-term self-interest agendas.
- This naturally leads to high quality data visualizations, where the future can have a tactile and interpretable representation, and where community members may explore and analyze what their community cohorts think about opportunities and challenges facing their community.

The methodology of scenario planning for Waseca allowed community leaders and members to tackle issues and questions of importance in an engaging and thought-provoking manner. This then led to the clarification of priorities and strategic actions that defined a clear road map for the Strategic Action Plan.

3.2.2   DRIVERS SHAPING THE FUTURE

Pre-Think Tank Survey respondents were asked to indicate the importance of potential drivers in relationship to the future of Waseca. In addition, respondents were asked how certain they were about the drivers' potential impact on Waseca. The resulting scatter plot helped identify two clusters. In addition, the respondents were asked to indicate if they thought the driver would overall be a positive or negative influence on the future of Waseca. The driver names colored in blue represented those viewed as a strong positive impact, and those in red a strong negative impact. The remaining coded clusters of drivers indicate those that were highest in importance and certainty of impact. These clusters were used to define the scenario matrix axes in the following section. Most drivers were seen to have a potential positive impact on the future, with the exception of 'Aging population and smaller households', and the 'Rural to urban population shifts' which were seen to have potential negative impacts on the future of Waseca.

Drivers are those influences that propel communities in one direction or another.
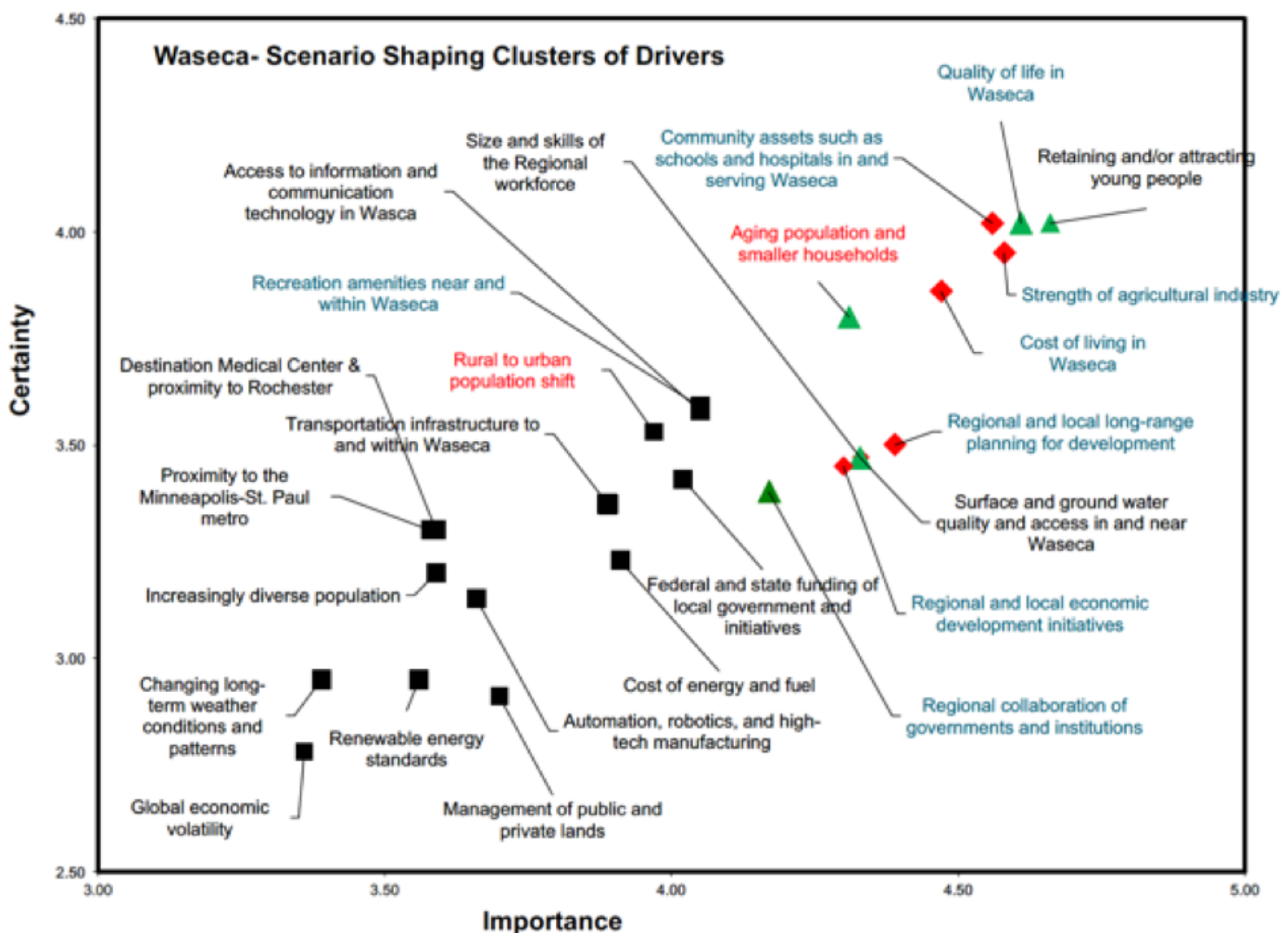
3.2.3 SCENARIO MATRIX – VIEWS OF THE FUTURE

Based on the Pre-Think Tank responses and the identified drivers shaping the future, themes were identified to become the basis for the two axes on the scenario matrix defining the four scenario spaces. These spaces were used to formulate the four plausible scenarios during the Think Tank. The two axes identified, and primary associated drivers were:

Ability to build on human capacity

- Retaining and/or attracting young people
- Quality of life in Waseca
- Aging population and smaller households
- Regional collaboration of governments and institutions

Capacity to leverage regional assets

- Community assets such as schools and hospitals
- Strength of agriculture
- Cost of living in Waseca
- Regional and long-range planning for development
- Regional and local economic development initiatives

Exploring the four scenario spaces allowed community members to investigate a range of potential future paths as they sought a preferred future.

A B

Well organized regional approach to economic and community development. The region leverages its strength in agriculture and recreational assets.

Regionally Competitive

AGING AND ASSETS

GAIN AND RETAIN

Capacity to leverage regional assets

Capacity underutilized

Maximizing local human capacity

Ability to build on human capacity

A The ability to build on local human capacity and potential is unfulfilled. Population is aging and skilled talent goes elsewhere to pursue opportunities.

D

B Local skills and capacity are maximized to boost quality of life and vibrancy of community. High levels of local collaboration and connectivity.

C

FOR AN HOUR FOR A LIFETIME NEVER AGAIN

SLEEPING SMARTIES

Disjointed regional approach

Lack of critical collaboration and limited ability to leverage local assets and resources into the regional economic 'ecosystem'.

D C

Think Tank participants named each scenario and created the narratives that describe each scenario future. Each scenario has its subsequent consequences and impacts on Waseca. Below are the four scenario descriptions for reference as building blocks in rationale for the Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan.

SCENARIO A	SCENARIO B	SCENARIO C	SCENARIO D
Aging and Assets	Gain and Retain	Sleeping Smarties	For an Hour, For a Lifetime, Never Again
On a regional basis, Waseca is competitive and is able to leverage its agricultural and recreational assets to the extent that it can find and attract a skilled workforce in these sectors. With an aging population, the tax base is reducing and more affordable housing is needed for those on fixed incomes. A shrinking population also means an inability to build on local human capacity and younger workers are seeking jobs elsewhere making Waseca a bedroom community. Infrastructure issues are degrading quality of life and skilled workers who don't work in agriculture and recreation are forced to relocate for jobs.	Waseca is both maximizing local human capacity and leveraging its regional assets. High skilled workers are able to live and work in Waseca and there is a high level of collaboration and connectivity between industry sectors. Quality of life is high and infrastructure keeps up with the demands of population increases. Technology advances including alternative energy sources enhance quality of life including clean water and drainage for farming systems. Proper sanitation and drainage systems are emphasized in water management policies.	Waseca is both maximizing local human capacity and leveraging its regional assets. High skilled workers are able to live and work in Waseca and there is a high level of collaboration and connectivity between industry sectors. Quality of life is high and infrastructure keeps up with the demands of population increases. Technology advances including alternative energy sources enhance quality of life including clean water and drainage for farming systems. Proper sanitation and drainage systems are emphasized in water management policies.	Waseca entities (government, public, private) do not collaborate on community building or leveraging of local assets. Competition from neighboring communities draws skilled workforce away leaving an aging population with increased service needs. The education system deteriorates due to lack of funding and tax base, as do infrastructural improvements. Pollution increases and public health including substance abuse becomes a greater issue. Businesses begin to locate elsewhere due to lack of services and community stability.

3.3   COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

Following the Think Tank in May 2017, the Community Engagement Survey collected responses by 567 people from June to October. The survey was made available to all who participated in the community engagement activities and consisted of 19 questions, some with open-ended responses. What was most striking about the survey results was the alignment of all cohorts in their responses. We often see splits along age, gender, ethnic, residence length or location, but the community of Waseca is wonderfully cohesive in its vision for the future. Following is a breakdown of the survey's key findings.

3.3.1   COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Questions 1-5 were profiling questions regarding gender, age, length of time living in Waseca, location of Waseca lived in, and ethnic background. Below are summary representations of the profiling questions. Significant efforts were made to obtain as many representative samples of respondents as possible.

Community Engagement Participant Profile
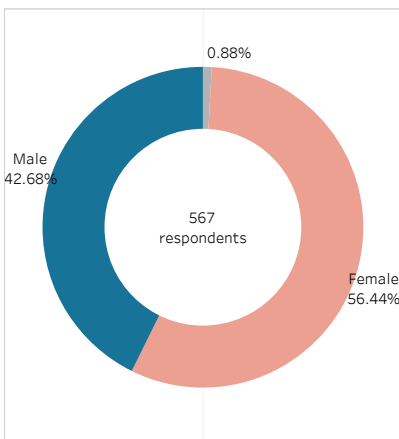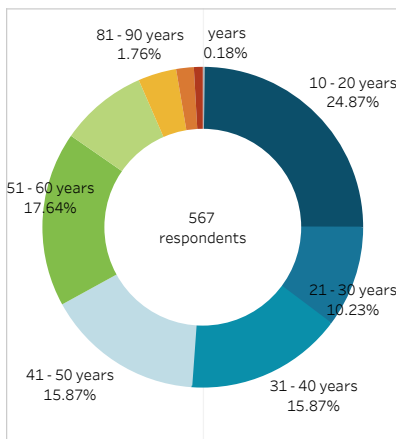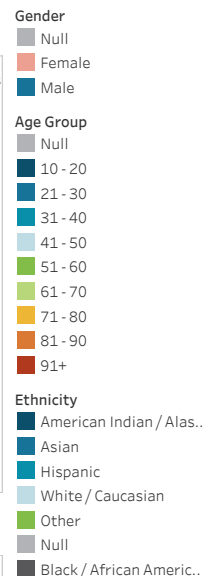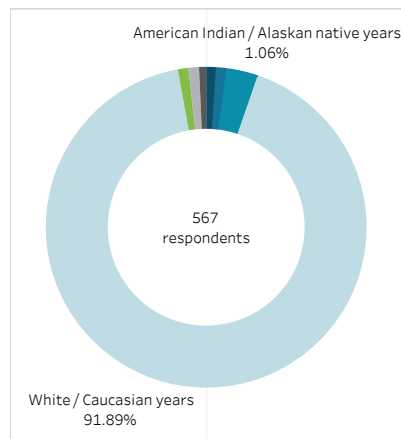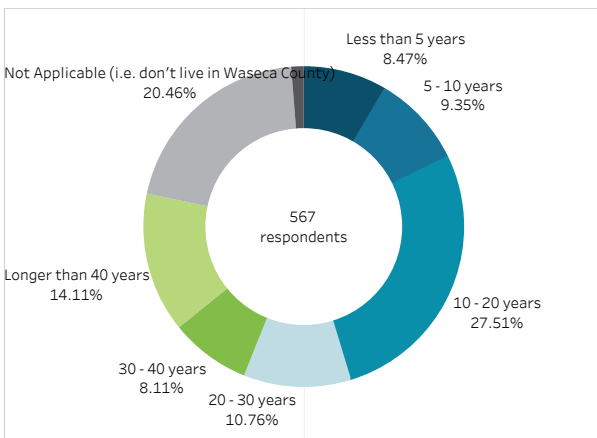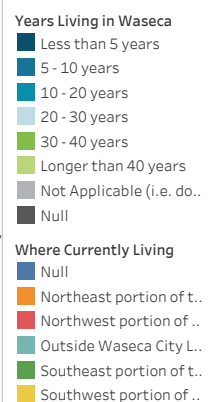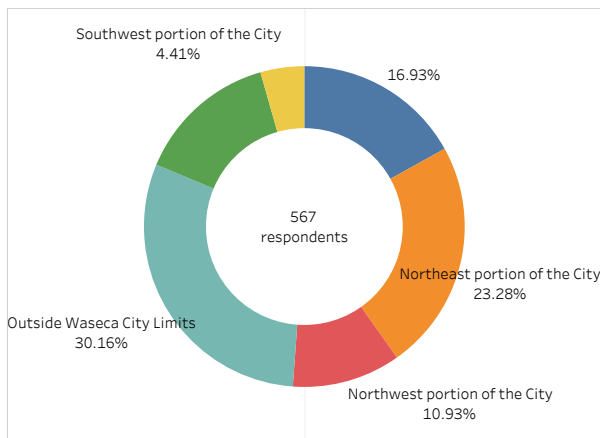
In the community engagement survey, questions 6-11 asked sensitivity questions along the continuums of the overarching themes that consisted of the matrix axes, 'Ability to build on human capacity' and 'Capacity to leverage regional assets'. These questions are illustrated both on a scale of 1 to 10, and in data visualizations showing cohort responses by individual profile. Below are brief summary representations of questions 6-11.

3.3.2   LEADERSHIP ROLE

Given the strong indication from the Think Tank that the community of Waseca was open to change, one of the questions we wanted to explore was what role community members thought government and institutions should play in the long-range planning and development of regional assets. The responses indicated a clear mandate for local government to provide a strong leadership role.

Exploring the four scenario spaces allowed community members to investigate a range of potential future paths as they sought a preferred future.

In terms of Waseca's ability to leverage regional assets what role should local government and institutions play in long-range planning and development?

Leadership Role

SCALE: 1 = Focus on local issues; 10 = High involvement in regional matters
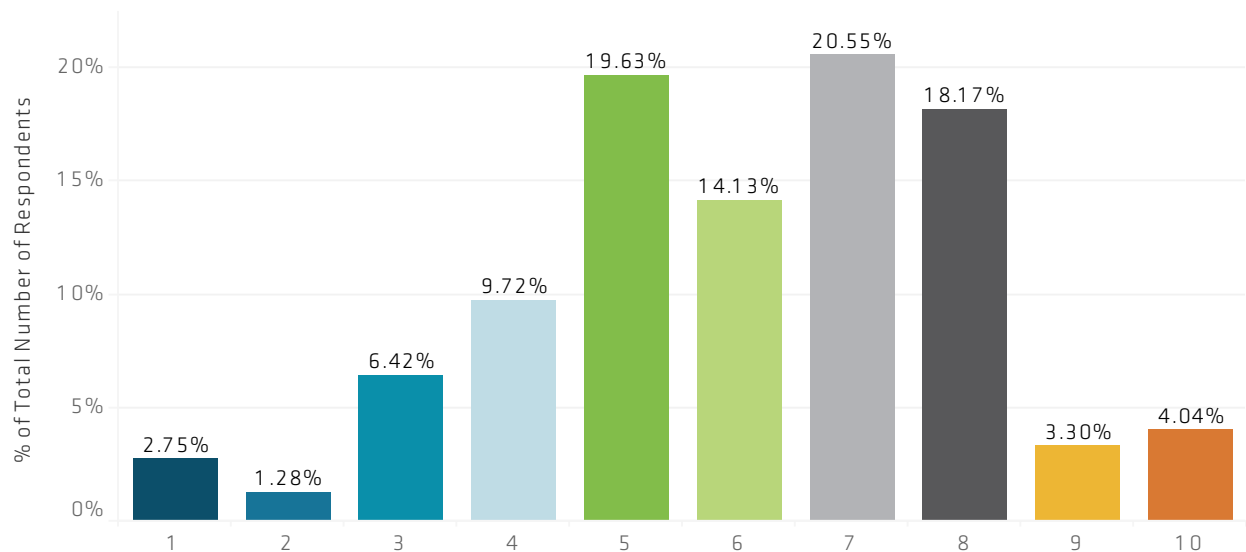
KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- Approximately 40% of respondents indicated that leadership should focus on local issues, whereas approximately 60% indicated that local government and institutions should have high involvement in regional matters.

- An overall majority of respondents were in the middle of the continuum indicating that a balanced approach with slightly more regional concern would be best for Waseca.

- From the written responses to this question, the highest level of interest was in strong local government leadership for Waseca.

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3.3.3   ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Waseca is a community rich in agricultural and recreational assets. Community members were asked how important they think it is to focus on these assets when considering the future trajectory of economic development in the region.

How important do you think it is to focus on economic development to leverage agricultural and recreational assets?

Agressive development of agricultural and recreational assets are considered high priorities for the community of Waseca.

Economic Development
SCALE: 1 = Not that important; 10 = Critically important to our future

% of Total Number of Respondents

Scale	%
1	
2	0.37%
3	2.02%
4	1.84%
5	7.90%
6	8.27%
7	21.32%
8	27.57%
9	11.40%
10	19.30%

DataInsight

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:
- An overwhelming number of respondents indicated that economic development in Waseca should leverage the agricultural and recreational assets of the community.
- From the written responses to this question, both agriculture and recreational assets were considered important, not only to build the economy, but to 'gain and retain' young people in the community.

3.3.4 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

It became evident at the Think Tank that the participants saw Waseca as part of a larger regional community fabric. To further explore this idea, the community survey asked whether the community should focus community development activities more locally or regionally.

What focus do you think Waseca should pursue for community development activities?

Community Development
SCALE: 1 = Focus on looking after our community;
10 = Integrate into the broader regional community fabric
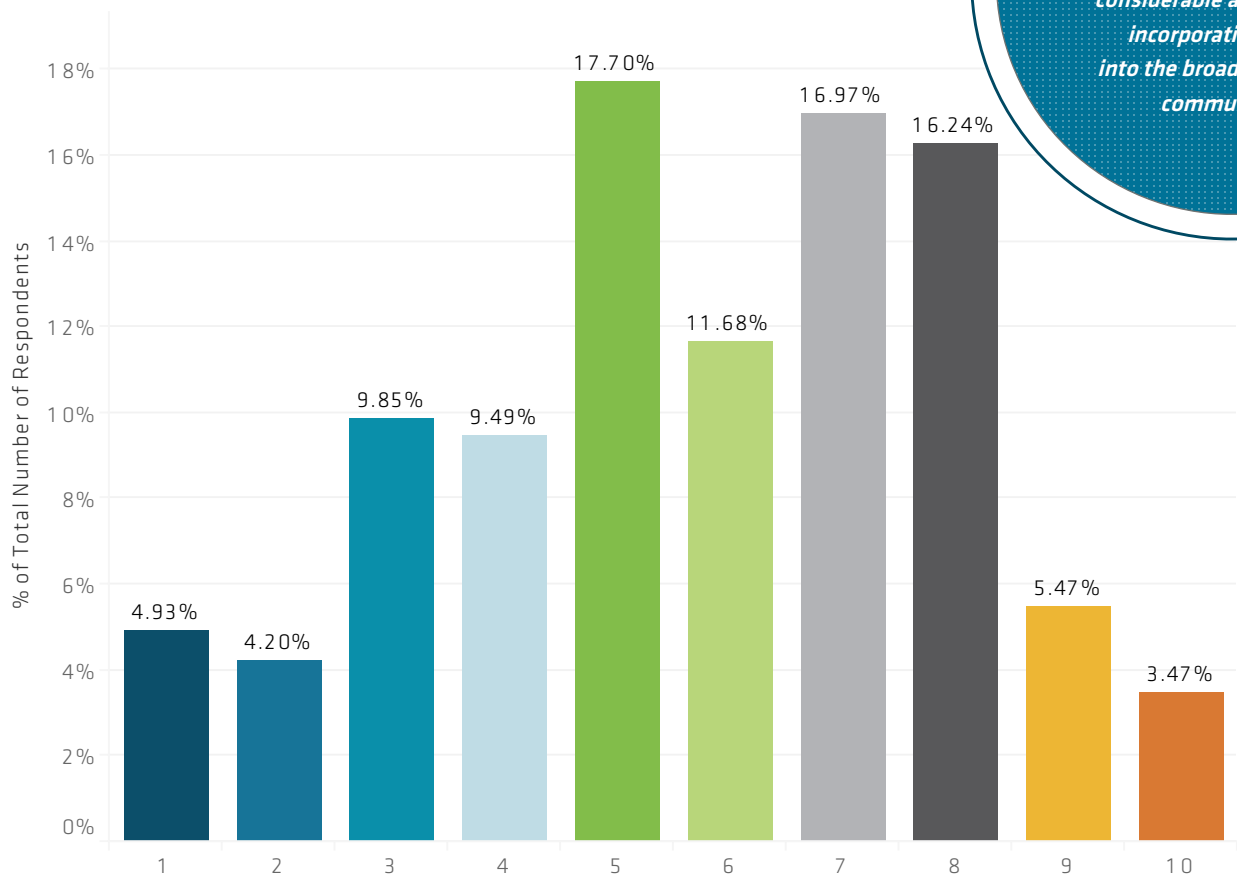
Where community members definitely want community development on a local level, there is considerable appetite for incorporating Waseca into the broader regional community fabric.

% of Total Number of Respondents

Scale	%
1	4.93%
2	4.20%
3	9.85%
4	9.49%
5	17.70%
6	11.68%
7	16.97%
8	16.24%
9	5.47%
10	3.47%

DataInsight

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- Respondents were almost evenly split with 46% leaning towards local community activity development versus 54% leaning towards integration into the broader regional community fabric.

- An overall majority of respondents were in the middle of the continuum indicating that a balanced approach would be best for Waseca.

- From the written responses to this question, entertainment activities, as well as improved business and retail options received the highest level of interest.

3.3.5 WORKPLACE FOCUS

Although many Waseca community members commute to work outside the county boundaries, the issue of retaining young professionals was raised as a priority for workforce development. This survey question explored where respondents considered the focus should be placed for employment opportunities. Today, many people in Waseca commute to work outside the county boundaries.

In terms of employment and work locations, how would you like Waseca to be 20 years in the future?

Waseca community members want good job opportunities for all cohorts both within the community and within the region.

Workplace Focus

SCALE: 1 = Focus mainly on local jobs; 10 = Connect people to the best careers within region

Chart: % of Total Number of Respondents

Scale	%
1	3.68%
2	2.76%
3	6.43%
4	9.01%
5	19.12%
6	10.66%
7	15.99%
8	15.26%
9	8.27%
10	8.82%

DataInsight

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- Approximately 41% of respondents indicated that employment opportunities should focus mainly on local job options whereas 59% indicated opportunities should link people to the best careers within the region.

- Because there are many good regional employment opportunities (Twin Cities, Mankato, Northfield, etc.) written responses were encouraging of focus on both options depending on the needs of the individual.

- Written responses indicated a concern for employment options for young people.

3.3.6   INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUS

One of the stated reasons for this visioning and strategic planning project was to get a better sense of where collaboration might occur with respect to future investment in community assets. This question explored where community wanted to see Waseca in the next 20 years. Community assets are important aspects of Waseca.

In terms of the future investment, how would you like Waseca to operate in the next 20 years?

Waseca community members take great pride in the strides already taken to develop top grade infrastructure in the community and want to see this trend continued.

Infrastructure Focus
SCALE: 1 = Consolidate our basic infrastructure;
10 = Strive to invest in top grade community infrastructure

% of Total Number of Respondents

Scale	%
1	1.52%
2	0.76%
3	2.09%
4	3.61%
5	14.23%
6	14.61%
7	24.29%
8	21.63%
9	7.02%
10	10.25%

DataInsight

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- An overwhelming number of respondents (78%) indicated that Waseca should strive to invest in top grade community infrastructure.
- Written responses indicated high levels of interest in focus on the infrastructural areas of schools, lakes and parks, sewer and water concerns.
- The highest level of interest in the written responses indicated a combined desire for Waseca to update old infrastructure and seek new ideas for infrastructural improvements, especially those that attract newcomers to the community.

3.3.7   COMMUNITY PROFILE

Global population trends indicate growth in population brought on by an aging population and improved health and nutrition. With these changes, leadership needs to make decisions based on who will be living in the community. This question asked community members how they would like the population mix to look 20 years from now. Like many communities, the population of Waseca is aging.

In terms of future population mix and demographics, how would you like Waseca to be 20 years in the future?

The Waseca community is seeking to take a balanced approach to becoming a community welcoming of a more diverse, mixed-age demographic.

Community Profile

SCALE: 1 = Location ideal for school age families, and healthy retirement; 10 = More diverse, mixed age community attractive to newcomers and younger professionals

Chart: % of Total Number of Respondents

Scale	%
1	2.47%
2	2.09%
3	4.18%
4	6.46%
5	18.44%
6	10.27%
7	15.40%
8	19.20%
9	9.70%
10	11.79%
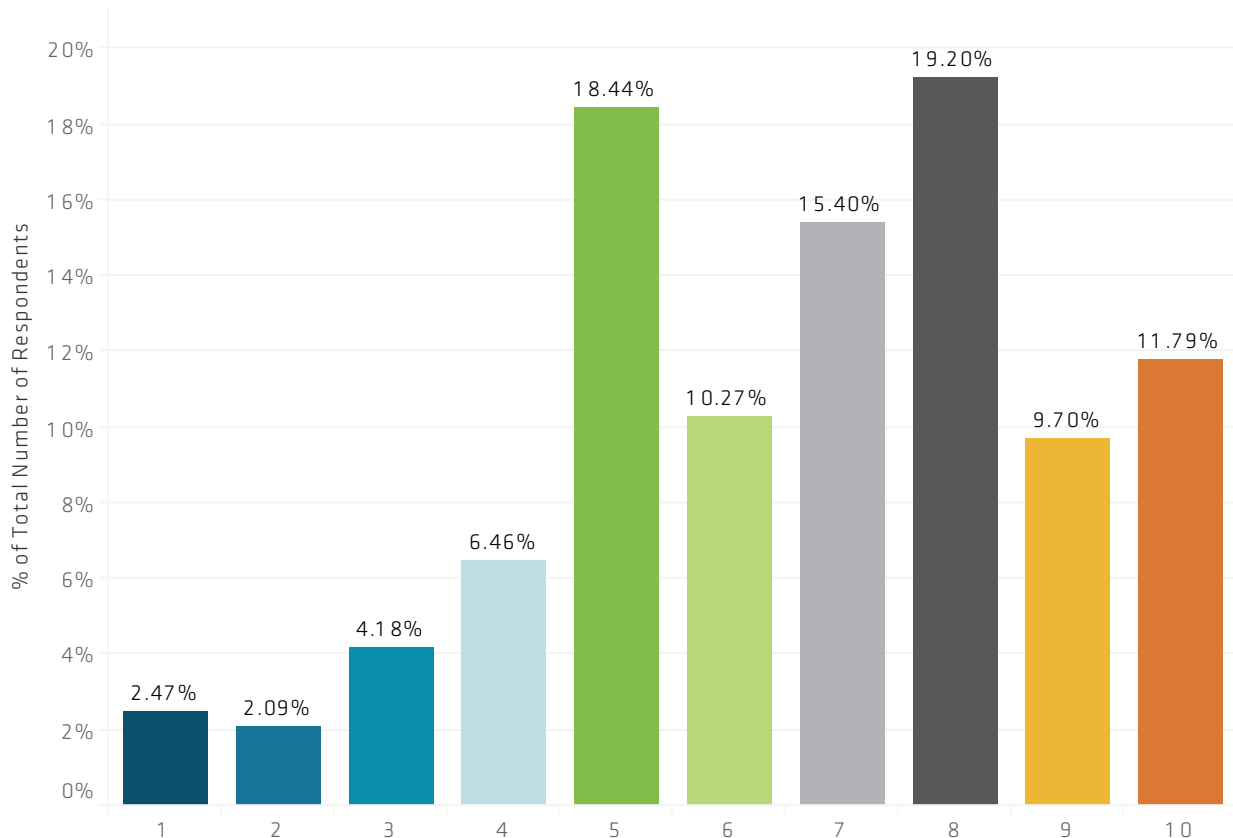
KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

• Approximately 27% of respondents indicated that they would like to see future demographics in Waseca to represent a location for school age families and healthy retirement, whereas 73% would like to see a more diverse, mixed age community attractive to newcomers and younger professionals.

• Written responses indicate a high level of concern for the need to provide a community that supports all types of community members, especially the attraction and retention of younger professionals.

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3.3.8   TEXT ANALYSIS FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

The Waseca Community Engagement Survey captured the input from 567 community members. Four of the sensitivity questions also allowed for open-ended narrative responses giving a closer glimpse into community perspectives. Below are the results from the questions on leadership role, community development, infrastructure focus and community profile.

Leadership Role

Text analysis of this question revealed that community members are looking for strong government leadership in a balanced approach to local and regional issues.

Text Analysis

Uncategorized 2.5%
Strong Gov Leadership 28.0%
Regional Issue Focus 13.0%
Local Issue Focus 12.0%
Balanced Issue Focus 21.0%
Business Promotion 10.0%
Growth and Job Creation 7.0%
Infrastructure Upgrades 4.0%
Local Housing Options 2.5%
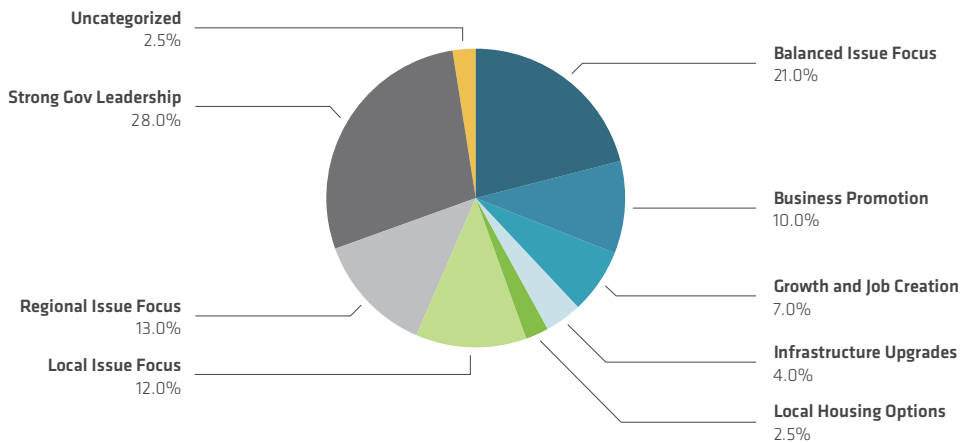
Community Development

Text analysis of this question revealed that community members are inclined toward pursuing community development activities leaning to the broader region and a balanced approach. Local emphasis was placed on entertainment, activities for youth and business and retail.

Text Analysis

Uncategorized 4%
Youth Activities 9%
Parks and Lakes 4%
Local Community Activity 23.0%
Job Opportunities 4.0%
Housing 3.0%
Growth Focus 5.0%
Balanced Approach 10.0%
Broader Region 17.0%
Business and Retail 8.0%
Elder Care / Medical 2.0%
Entertainment Activities 11.0%
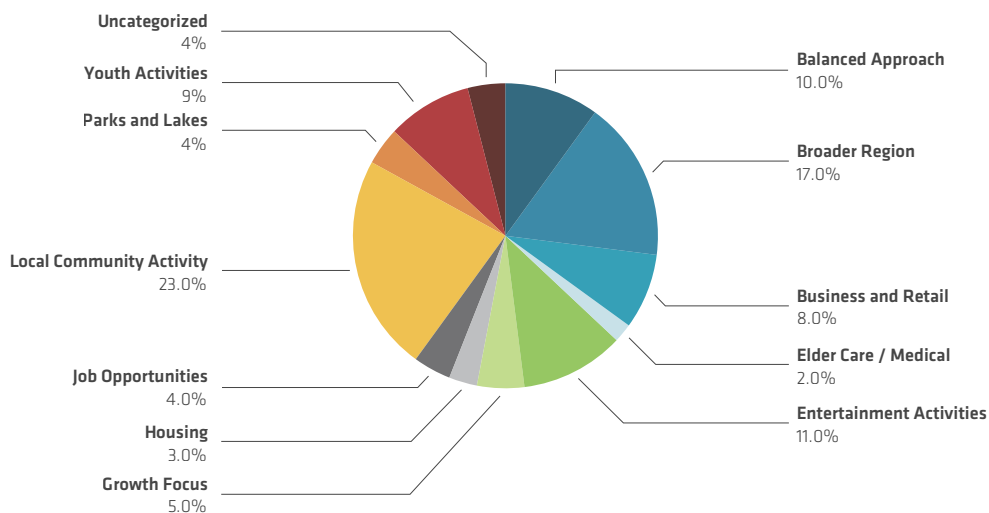
Infrastructure Focus

Text analysis revealed that community members have a strong desire for top grade infrastructure as well as new ideas and an 'update' of the community.

Text Analysis

Uncategorized
5%

Update / New Ideas
18%

Top Grade Infrastructure
34.0%

Agricultural Focus
1.0%

Balanced Infrastructure
14.0%

Basic Infrastructure
11.0%

I Don't Know
2.0%

Lakes and Parks System
4.0%

No New Taxes
1.0%

Schools Focus
6.0%

Sewer and Water Focus
4.0%
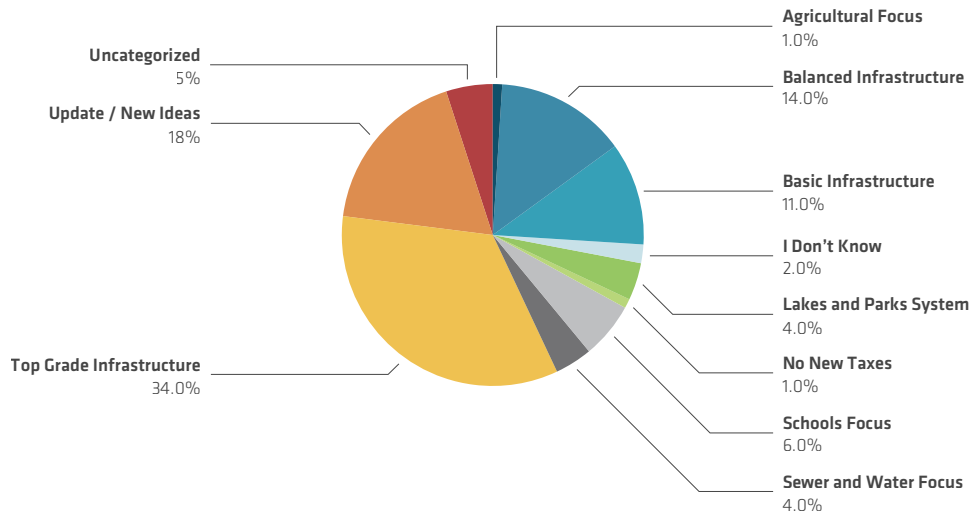
Community Profile

Text analysis of this question revealed that where there is a definite leaning towards a more 'diverse, mixed age community attractive to newcomers and younger professionals', there is also a desire for a balanced approach for all demographic areas. There was a particular need expressed for youth and families, young professionals and a growth focus going forward.

Text Analysis

Uncategorized
4.0%

Young Professional Appeal
14.0%

Young and Families
14.0%

Status Quo
9.0%

Growth Focus
10.0%

Balanced for All
21.0%

Diverse and Mixed
25.0%

Elderly Focus
3.0%
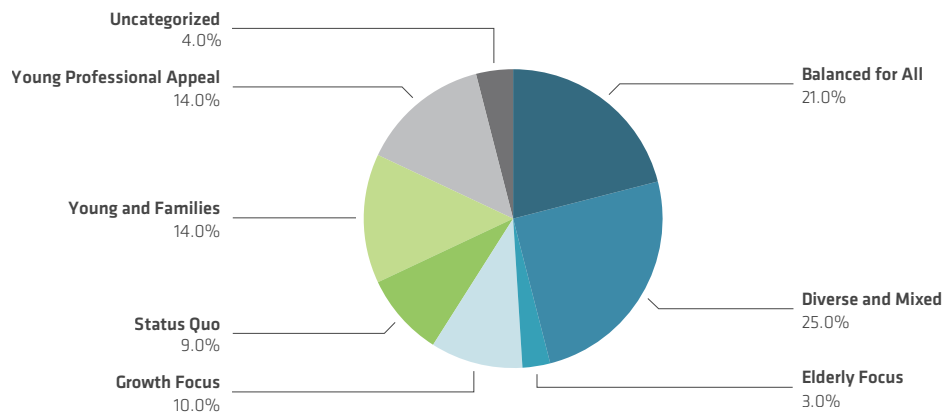
3.4   KEY METRICS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The community engagement work undertaken as part of the visioning process was guided by the intent to be an open inclusive process. Significant efforts were made to ensure that there was a wide demographic spread and a strong representative cross section of the community. In particular, there were several important aspects of the engagement sessions and data analysis:

The community engagement in visioning and planning activities brought some of the highest levels of participation that we have seen in a community.

• Deliberate efforts were undertaken to include typically underrepresented groups. Examples include sessions held at places of work and worship, and all Waseca high school seniors.

• The data visualization of the survey results, hosted on the project website allows an in-depth exploration of the data, including the ability to review the results by different population cohorts within the community.

Key Metrics of the Community Engagement Process

WASECA COUNTY FREE FAIR
Information booth at the
Waseca Fair in July 2017

THINK TANK RECONVENE
20+ Participants

SPRING AND FALL WASECA BUSINESS SUMMITS
80+ Attendees

ACTION PLANNING FOCUS GROUP
20+ Participants

COMMUNITY SURVEY
567
responses

THINK TANK WORKSHOP
60+ Participants representing a cross section of the Waseca community

ELECTED OFFICIALS FOCUS GROUP
20+ Participants from the City of Waseca, Waseca County and the School District

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS
16 Workshops with nearly 570 people

VISION SURVEY
567 Detailed survey responses

HIGH SCHOOL SESSIONS
120+ All senior Waseca High School students participated in one-hour workshop sessions

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Our mission in this new century is clear. For good or ill, we live in an interdependent world. We can't escape each other. Therefore, we have to spend our lives building a global community of shared responsibilities, shared values, shared benefits.

– Bill Clinton

3.5 IMPORTANCE OF A SHARED VISION FOR WASECA

3.5.1 VALUE OF A SHARED VISION

From the beginning of this project, the Steering Committee sought and encouraged as much input as possible into the outcomes through community engagement activities. The importance of having a voice and participating in the planning process was communicated by various means including the creation of a project website where information could be obtained about all project activities. The results of the community survey indicate a clear appreciation of the importance of a shared vision by the community.

A shared vision enables communities to act confidently and decisively with a strong cohesive voice.

How important do you think it is to have a SHARED VISION for the future of Waseca?

Importance of shared vision
SCALE: 1 = Not Important; 10 = Highly Important
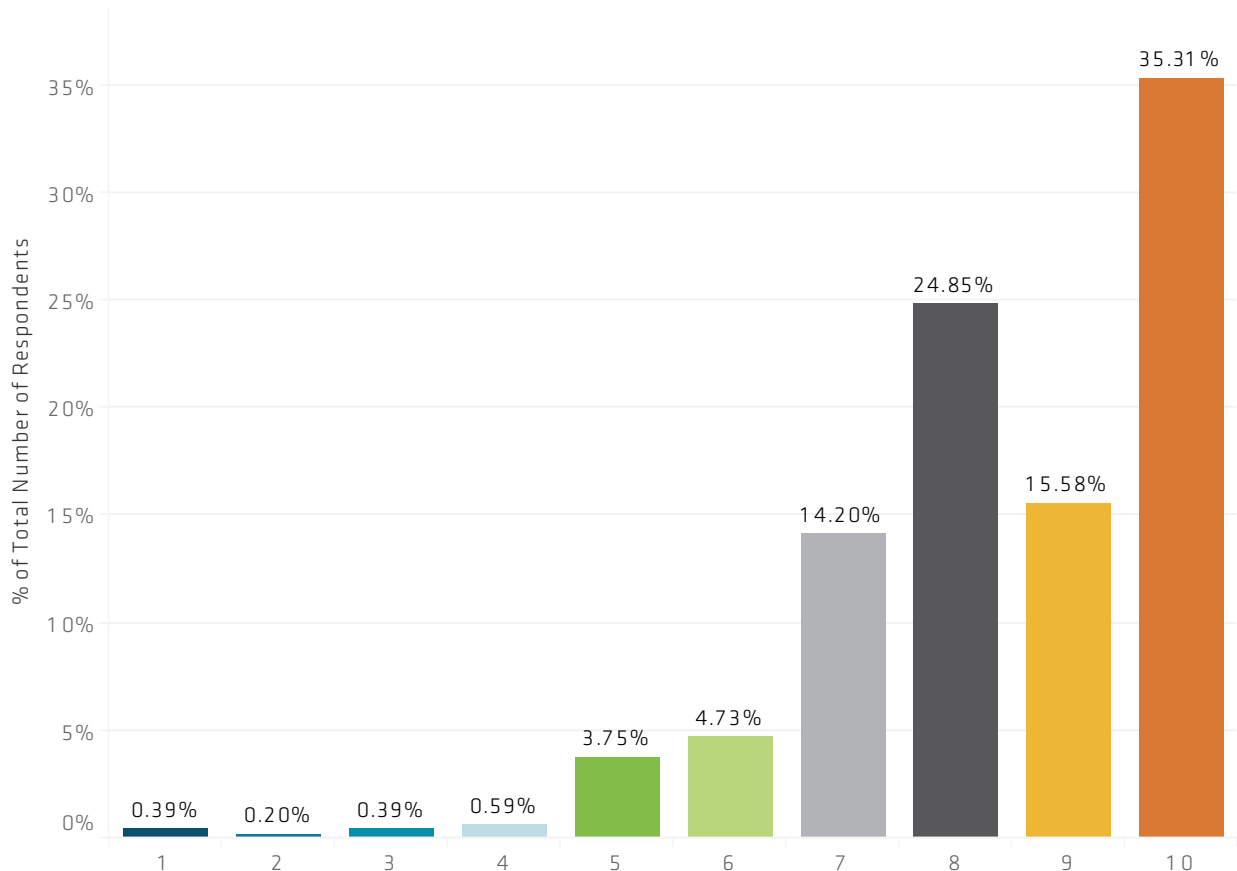
KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- These results reflect a strong view that people see this visioning process as critically important to helping shape the future of the community.
- This sentiment was repeatedly reflected in the workshop discussions and written responses as well.

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3.5.2   USING THE SHARED VISION

From a slightly different angle, respondents were asked how important it is to consider the shared vision when making decisions for the community. This question was intended to distinguish between having a shared vision of the future as a whole and the need for a shared vision when making the hard choices necessary to implement the strategic action plan.

How Important is it to consider the shared vision when MAKING DECISIONS for the community?

Using shared vision
SCALE: 1 = Not Important; 10 = Highly Important
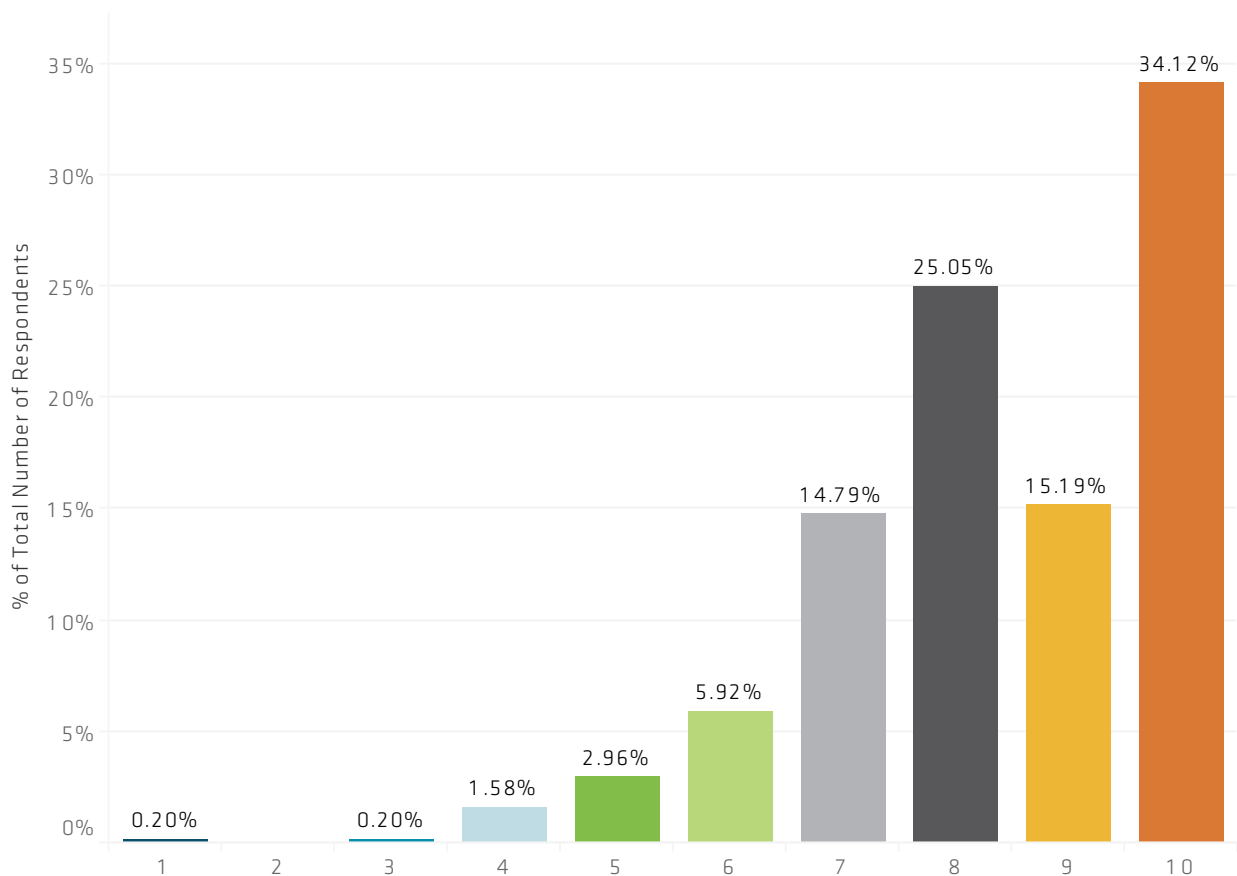
KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- Similar to the Importance of Shared Vision, these results reflect a strong view that people want to see the vision used in community decision making processes.

- This suggests there would be merit in developing a system for community members to see the vision being used as a guiding framework in future decision-making forums.

The Waseca Community Vision needs to be applied across the board in decision-making for the community.

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3.5.3 URGENCY FOR ACTION

One of the notable features of the community engagement discussions was that Waseca leadership needs to implement the strategic action plan with a sense of urgency. A sense of skepticism was observed in terms of 'whether anything would be done' after the engagement process and this indicates that the community has high expectations that the roll-out will occur without delay.

How quickly do you think community leaders need to adapt and pursue the vision?

Urgency of Action
SCALE: 1 = Not urgent right now; 10 = Extremely Urgent
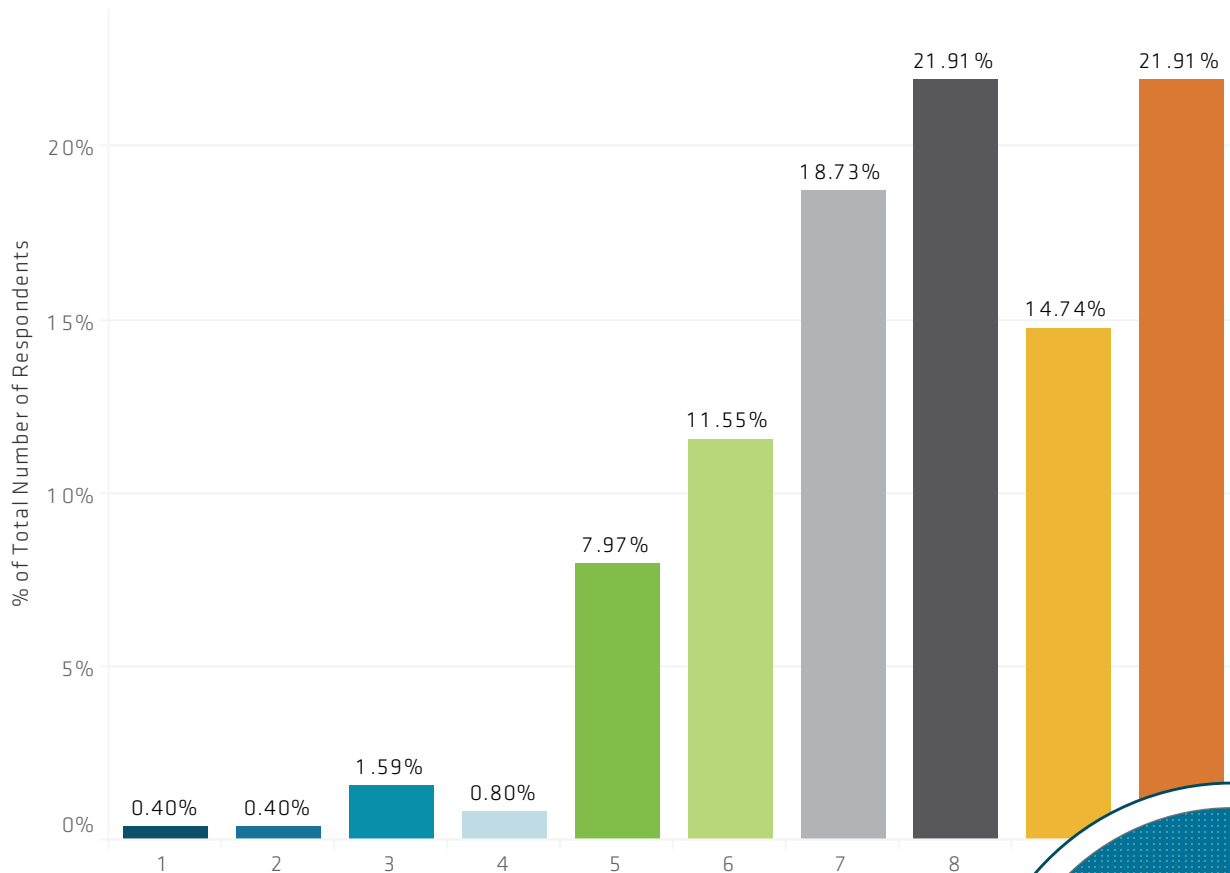
KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- There is quite a strong sense of urgency reflected in the result.

- During discussions in workshops, the tenor of comments was that the community should 'get on with implementing the vision'; but not rush head-long into ideas that are not well developed or researched.

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Community members have communicated a sense of urgency for leadership to enact the strategic action plan.

3.5.4 CURRENT PROGRESS REFLECTING THE PREFERRED FUTURE

To gauge if any progress was being made towards the preferred future, respondents were asked what initiatives or developments currently happening in Waseca reflected the essence of their preferred scenario. With a significant headstart on intiatives that will steer the community towards the preferred future, some of the easier early steps will be to build and strengthen these initiatives and assets.

Current Progress Reflecting the Preferred Future

What initiatives or developments happening NOW in Waseca reflect the essence of your preferred scenario for the future? (ie. Roadwork, school district, commercial development, housing, etc.)
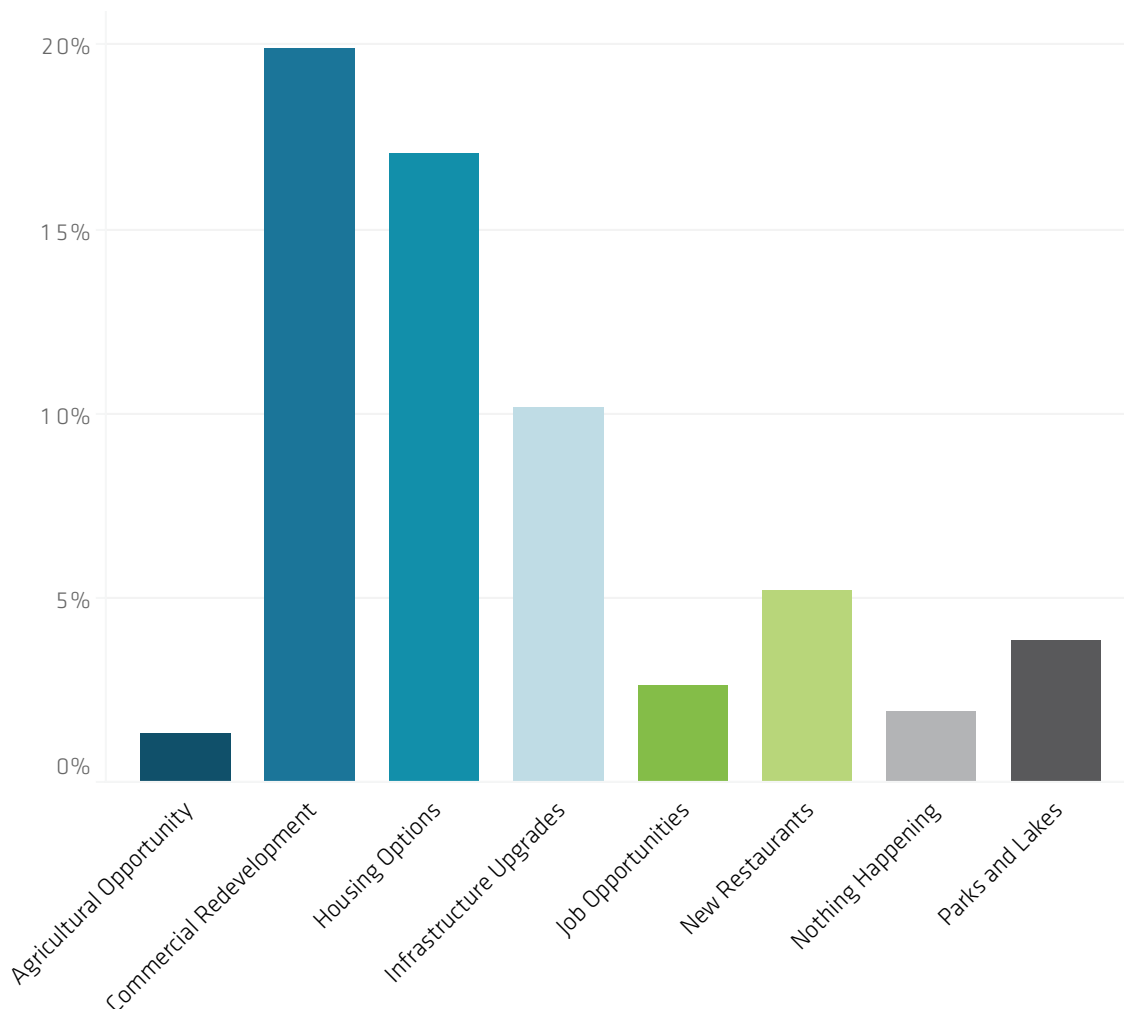
Survey results show Waseca is currently doing many things that align with the vision of the preferred future, Gain and Retain.

"If you're walking down the right path and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress."

- Barack Obama

3.5.5   VALUE OF THE FUTURE PLANNING AND VISIONING PROCESS

The value of the visioning process in future planning can not be underestimated. It brings together community members and stakeholders to build a common good and future community for all generations. Waseca is unique in the cohesive community voice that emerged from the engagement process across all cohorts and age groups. This provides leadership with a remarkable opportunity to engage in decision-making with the understanding that they will be supported by a majority of voices across demographic groups. This question asked community members directly if they thought the future planning and visioning process was worthwhile for the community.

Waseca's enthusiastic pursuit of future planning and a cohesive vision for the community shows commitment to the future generations of the area.

Do you think this future planning and visioning process is an interesting and valuable exercise for Waseca and its residents? (Please select a point on the scale)

Value of visioning process
SCALE: 1 = Waste of time; 10 = Very interesting and valuable

Bar chart — % of Total Number of Respondents by scale point:

Scale	%
1	0.61%
2	0.41%
3	0.41%
4	1.43%
5	7.35%
6	7.35%
7	15.71%
8	22.04%
9	12.65%
10	32.04%
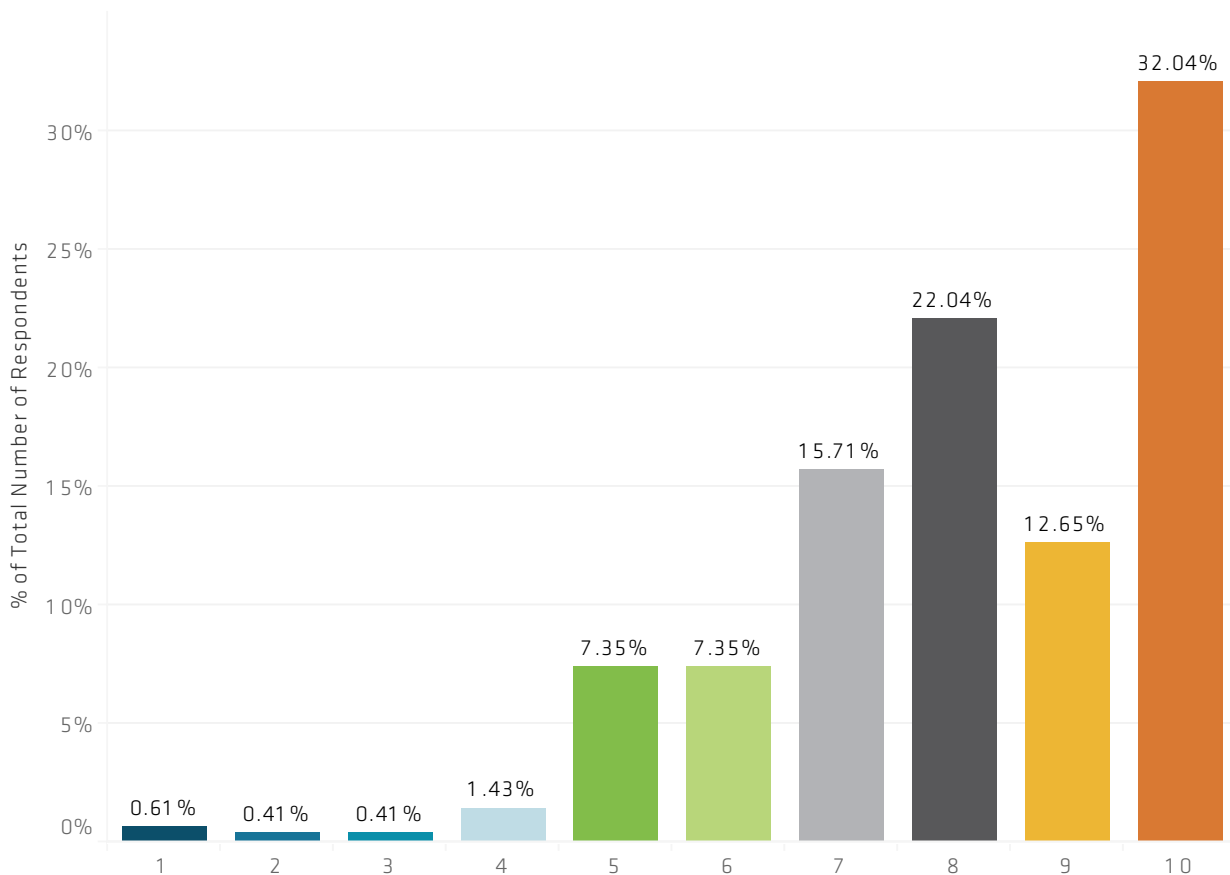
KEY POINT TO NOTE:

There has been very strong support for the visioning process, and people have predominately perceived it as 'valuable and interesting'.

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3.6   FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

3.6.1   THINK TANK RECONVENE, SEPTEMBER 2017

Think Tank participants and additional community members were reconvened on September 29, 2017, to review the results from the broad community engagement sessions, as well as the results from the in-depth community survey. The cohesive nature of survey responses across cohort groups was considered significant validation of the engagement process. Following the review of engagement results, participants in the Think Tank Reconvene were asked to break into groups to discuss and list out what they thought should be done to support the visioning process.

> *Waseca's extensive participation in the engagement process showed persistent dedication to the future of the community.*

3.6.2   ACTION PLAN FOCUS GROUP MEETING, OCTOBER 2017

On October 16, 2017, an Action Planning Meeting was held with Steering Committee members and Advisory Committee members to map out priorities for action in the Waseca Strategic Action Plan. Participants reviewed all results from the visioning and strategic action planning process including the compiled survey input from 567 survey respondents. Participants were then broken into groups to discuss specific actions which may be taken to guide the community of Waseca from the expected scenario to the preferred scenario.

3.6.3   ACTION PLAN FOCUS GROUP MEETING, DECEMBER 2017

On December 12, 2017, elected officials from the City of Waseca, County and School District gathered for the first time in ten years to review the results from the community visioning and strategic planning processes. Attendees agreed to champion the vision by relating decisions and organizational actions to the common vision. It was also agreed that the group would meet on a quarterly basis beginning in 2018 to not only report out on progress being made towards the strategic action items, but also to collaborate on common projects and planning going forward. It was suggested that a common 'Report Card' to the community on Vision 2030 progress should be made on an annual basis to highlight their collaborative efforts.

4.0 CREATING THE COMMUNITY VISION

The detailed community and stakeholder engagement process produced strong consensus on the desire to build a pathway to a common future scenario. The process included extensive planning meetings, a Think Tank, community visioning sessions, focus groups and surveys. This thorough process aimed to build alignment around a common vision and a robust foundation of support for the Strategic Action Plan within the community.

"If you don't know where you are going, you won't end up there."
– Community Survey Respondent

Advisory Committee Planning Calls

Steering Committee Planning Meetings

Scenario-Planning Think Tank Workshop

Community and Stakeholder Engagement Workshops

Community Engagement Surveys

Think Tank Reconvene

Action Plan Meetings

SHARED VISION

4.1   EXPECTED FUTURE

WASECA VISION 2030 WORKSHOP
EXPECTED FUTURE – 2030

'Expected' Future

During the Think Tank workshop and the community engagement sessions, participants were asked to consider what they considered to be the 'Expected Future'. The 'expected future' is the one community members and stakeholders deemed most likely to occur if there is 'no change in what we are currently doing'. Participants were asked to identify the cell within the matrix that represented the 'Expected Future'.

Think Tank Heat Map

The Heat Map shows the majority of responses located in the 'Expected Future' between Scenario A – Aging and Assets, and Scenario D – For an Hour, For a Lifetime, Never Again.

This image shows the compilation of heat maps from the 466 community survey respondents that completed the online Heat Map. The Heat Map shows the majority of respondent in a similar position to the Think Tank respondents, but primarily in Scenario D – For an Hour, For a Lifetime, Never Again.

Heat-map - Expected and Preferred Futures

4.2 PREFERRED FUTURE

WASECA VISION 2030 WORKSHOP
PREFERRED FUTURE – 2030

Most significant for Waseca is the overwhelming alignment around the community's vision for the future. This was supported by both the hard copy completion of the Think Tank Heat Maps and the online responses to the Community Survey Heat Maps illustrated below.

Think Tank Heat Maps

The Think Tank Heat Map shows a majority of responses in the middle and upper right of the scenario B – Gain and Retain. This indicates a strong alignment among the Think Tank Participants.

Online Community Survey Heat Map

The Online Community Surveys show a strong alignment among the 474 community members that responded to the question. The Heat Map shows a majority of responses in the upper right scenario space – Gain and Retain.

Heat-map - Expected and Preferred Futures
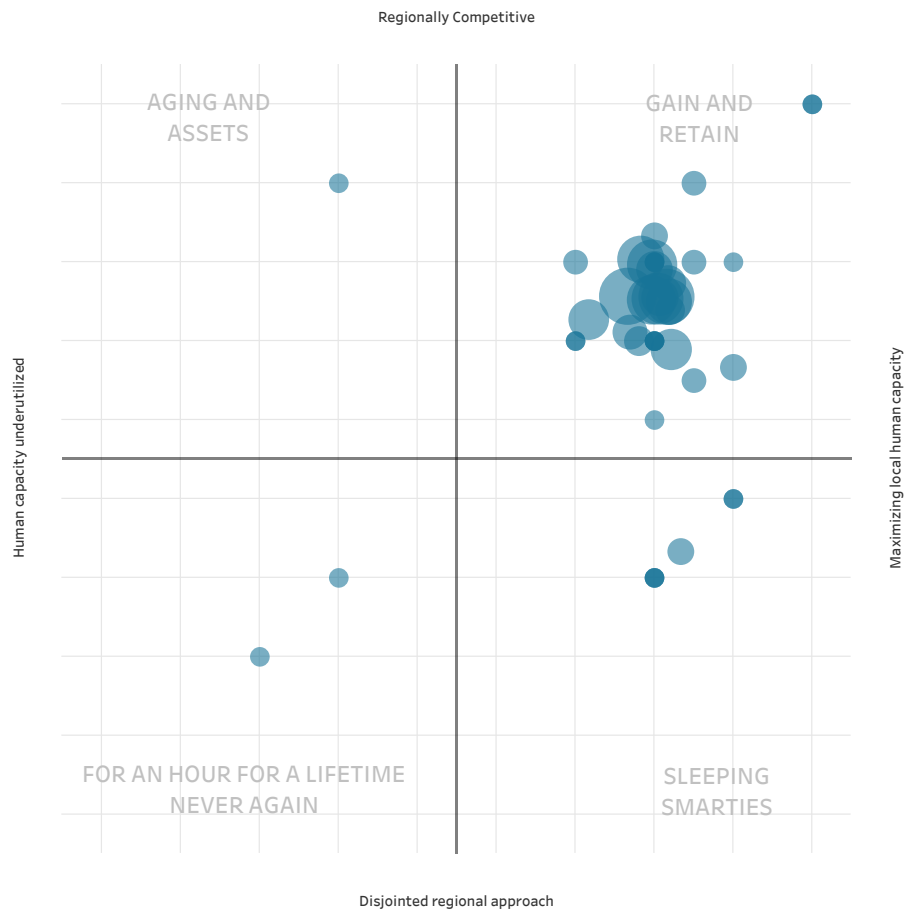
4.3 VALIDATION OF THE PREFERRED FUTURE

The Heat Maps discussed in the previous sections of this report represent participants' responses to a plausible scenario matrix. The validation step aims to determine people's behavioral response to change and compare that to the 'Preferred Future'.

The following validation matrix is constructed by using each individual's responses to six questions in the community engagement survey. These questions were based on topics that represented sub-sets of each of the axes. In each question there was a scale mirroring the broad continuum of the axes. The responses were then recombined to create an X and Y value and then plotted over the scenario matrix. This process gives an insight into how each individual might respond on a topic by topic level, and if their responses are in-line with the 'Preferred Future'.

The scenario validation matrix provides clear evidence that supports the community's aligned desire to pursue the preferred future of Gain and Retain.

Scenario Matrix Validation Chart
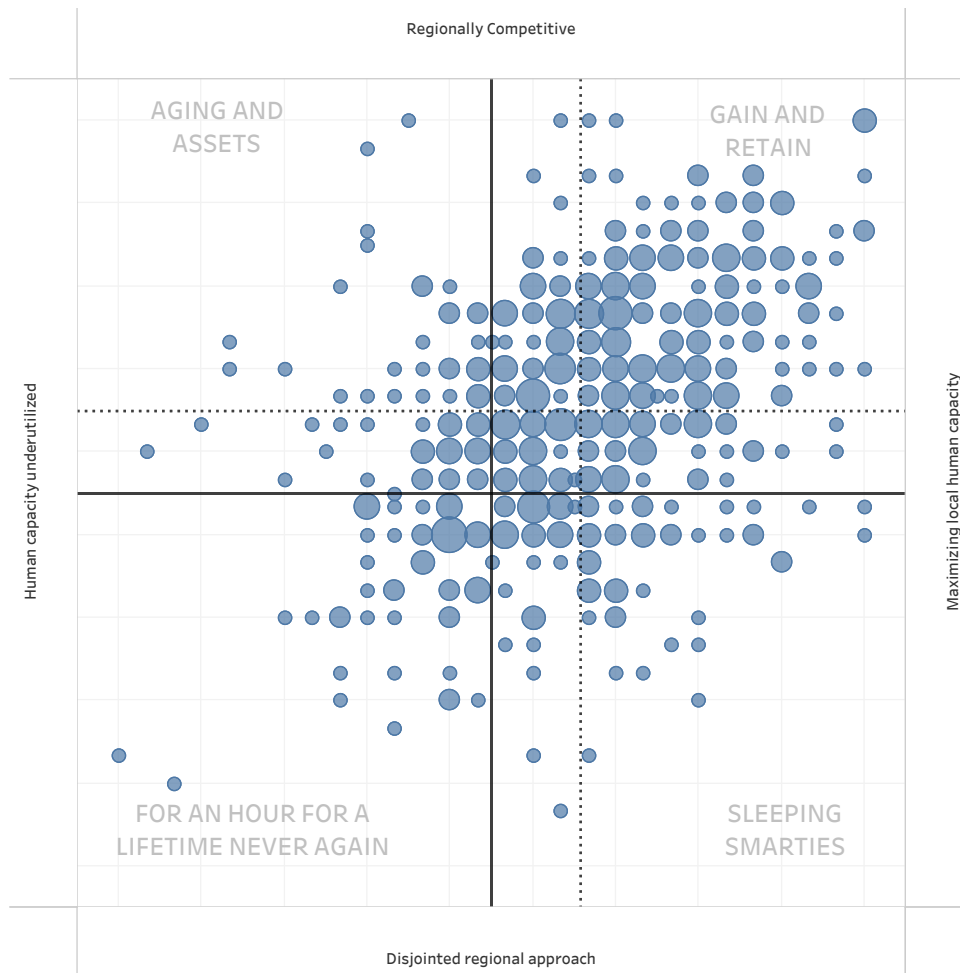
4.4 COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

A community vision frames the community's priorities for resource allocation. It provides a check for all actions by providing the opportunity for self-reflection on whether the community's goals are being met in ways that match the vision and priorities. The community vision statement was developed from feedback that was collected through the engagement process and supports the Preferred Future of Gain and Retain

Gain and Retain Scenario Description:

Waseca is both maximizing local human capacity and leveraging its regional assets. High skilled workers are able to live and work in Waseca and there is a high level of collaboration and connectivity between industry sectors. Quality of life is high and infrastructure keeps up with the demands of population increases. Technology advances including alternative energy sources enhance quality of life including clean water and drainage for farming systems. Proper sanitation and drainage systems are emphasized in water management policies.
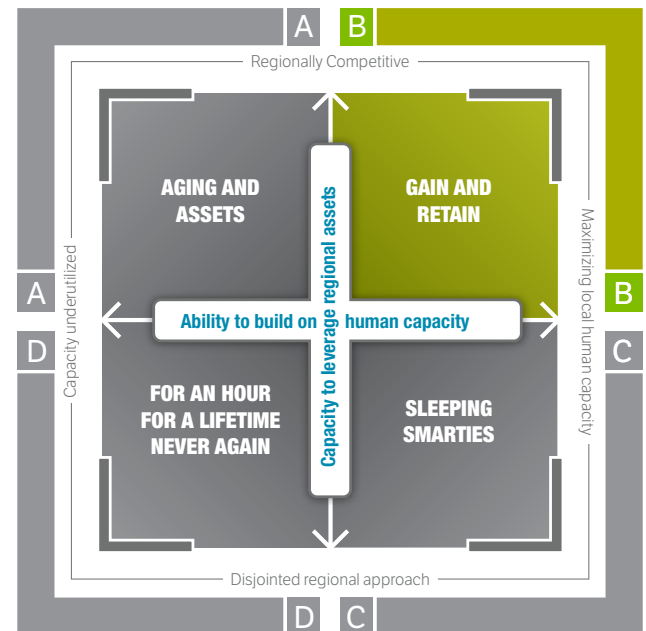
Waseca Community Vision Statement

Waseca is an energetic, wholesome community that welcomes and supports all people in all stages of life. We envision a future that strengthens our regional connections through leadership opportunities, economic development and investment in high quality community assets resulting in the creation of a vibrant, dynamic community of the future.

4.5   CREATING THE FUTURE PATHWAY

The path from 'For an Hour, For a Lifetime, Never Again' to 'Gain and Retain' will not necessarily be a direct or linear path. Based on input from the Think Tank, visioning workshop sessions, Think Tank Reconvene, and Action Planning Meeting and Focus Group, it was determined that the optimal realistic scenario path will by a broad progression from the expected to the preferred future. This scenario path is the foundation for the strategic pillars and action areas outlined in the Waseca Strategic Action Plan Roadmap.

Based on the close alignment of all 567 survey responses, how do we close the gap between expected and preferred futures? That will be the challenge to be met by the Strategic Action Plan.

Getting from Expected to Preferred
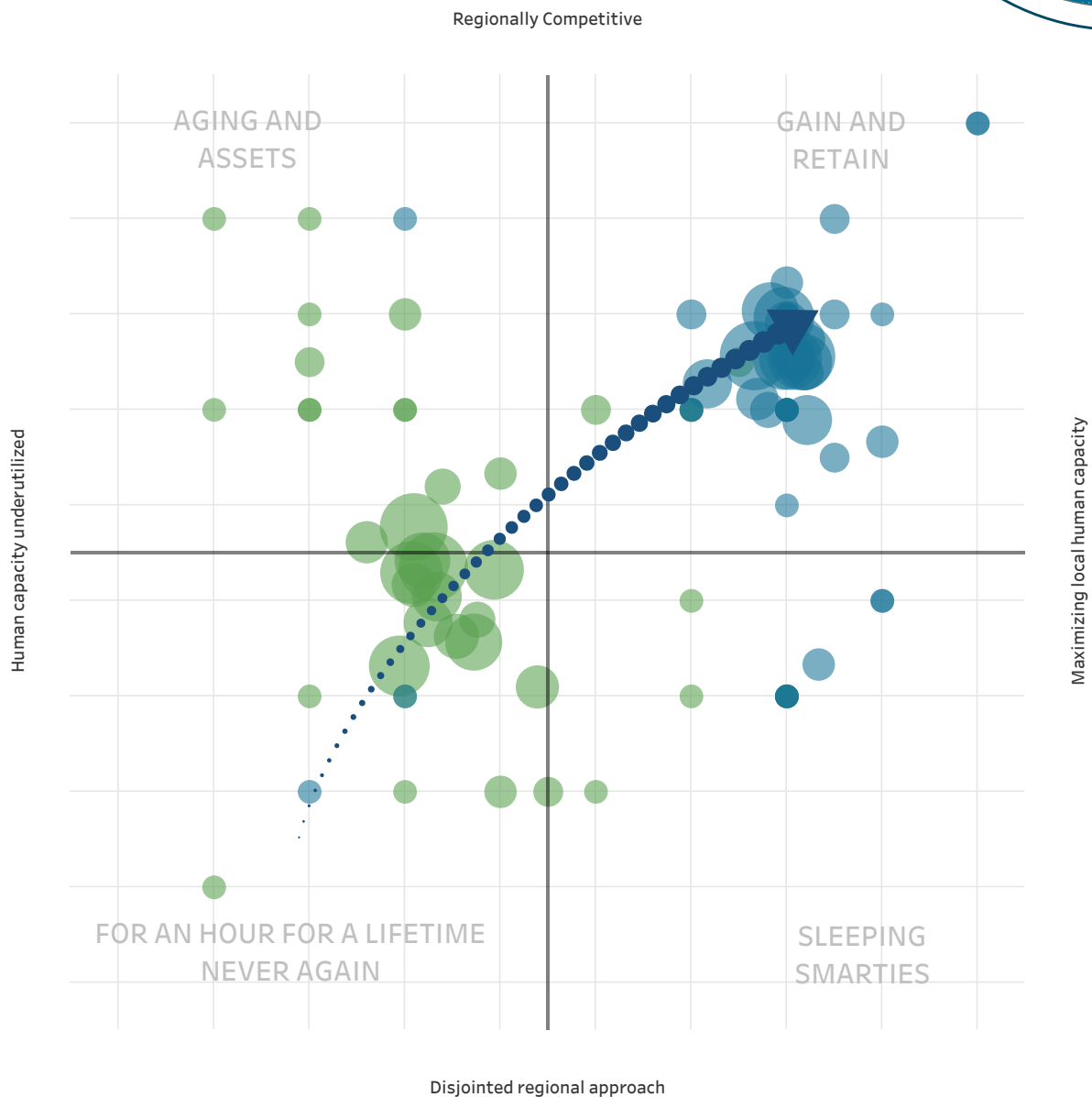
5.0   STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

5.1   STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

The ideas and recommendations outlined in this Strategic Action Plan have been drawn directly from the planning and engagement process. The suggested actions are intended to incorporate the engagement input as well as the strategic actions identified by the Action Plan Focus Group. The actions also complement existing successful activities within Waseca, such as the remodeling of the high school and extensive roadwork, commercial development, and recent infrastructure upgrades. With such significant high-quality work already taking place in the community, the plan is designed to bring strength and cohesiveness to these existing efforts and build upon them to create desired change.

The action plan is structured around four key strategic pillars within the two overarching matrix axes of "Ability to build on local human capacity" and "Capacity to leverage regional assets." These represent the themes that repeatedly emerged throughout the surveys, Think Tank, engagement workshops and focus group sessions.
The four key pillars are:

- Create high quality community assets

- Expand and leverage economic development initiatives

- Strengthen regional connectivity

- Create a vibrant dynamic community

The action plan is not intended to solve all community challenges in the immediate short term. Rather, it presents a series of strategic actions that can be achieved in the short to medium-term that will produce long-term results. They are intended to produce systemic and catalytic shifts that will drive the future economic growth and vitality of the Waseca community and attract new residents and investments. The actions are designed to build the future pathway to the preferred scenario: Gain and Retain.

5.2   DYNAMIC SYSTEMS-THINKING APPROACH

The intent of the Waseca Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan is to both provide inspiration and a foundation of strategic pillars upon which the Strategic Action Plan can be built. We believe this approach is an opportunity for Waseca to become a significant force within the peri-urban economy and arc of innovation that surround Minneapolis-St. Paul. Repeatedly throughout the Waseca visioning process - from the Spring Business Summit to the Think Tank through the engagement sessions to the Fall Business Summit - we heard that the people of Waseca are ready and willing to participate in significant change and are looking for a plan that will guide them to their preferred future. Now is the time to act.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC PILLARS AND ACTION AREAS

Leverage governmental collaboration and cooperation

Activate strong leadership to encourage collaboration between organizations

Promote social connectivity within the community

Foster entrepreneurships and encourage innovation

Launch programs that attract and retain youth and young professionals

Transform the education sytem into lifelong learning

Update community aesthetics and infrastructure

Anchor the downtown as 'heart' of the community

4. Create a Vibrant Dynamic Community

1. Create High Quality Community Assets

Gain and Retain

3. Strengthen Regional Connectivity

2. Expand and Leverage Economic Development Initiatives

Collaborate with regional entities to build connectivity

Expand higher education connections to attract regional innovation

Build top grade infrastrucure

Become a 'Destination Location'

Identify and establish a long-range plan with metrics for success

Create a community marketing and branding initiative

Diversify and intensify the agricultural sector

Expand technology, professional and business sectors

High quality community assets and infrastructure are the features of the community that will serve to 'gain and retain' the people of Waseca.

6.0   STRATEGIC ACTION PILLARS

6.1   CREATE HIGH QUALITY COMMUNITY ASSETS

6.1.1   IMPORTANCE OF HIGH QUALITY COMMUNITY ASSETS

Waseca has undergone many swings of economic cycles over the years. This has resulted in outmigration, declining infrastructure quality and a lack of new civic and private investment. The effects of flooding in the Waseca area in recent years have placed increased demands on public funds for basic infrastructure that has made if difficult until recently to apply efforts to build more aesthetic aspects of the community. These macro trends often result in communities where quality of life and appeal is degraded and create a spiral that can make them less attractive to new residents, especially if social systems and housing stocks fall behind contemporary standards.

This action plan aims to explore and build on four areas identified throughout the visioning process as key to creating high quality community assets in Waseca. The following strategies were identified as key to supporting this pillar:

- Launch programs that attract and retain youth and young professionals
- Transform the education system into lifelong learning
- Anchor the downtown as 'Heart of the Community
- Update community aesthetics and infrastructure

These actions provide the 'heavy lifting' necessary to build momentum on the future pathway for building quality of life in Waseca. For example, a focus on the expansion of housing options applies to young and old and across economic strata. A more diverse housing stock could help to both gain younger populations as they look for affordable housing and retain older populations as they go through downsizing and the aging process. Downtown Waseca is an asset that can be built on and its successful revitalization as the heart of the community will draw new residents and create a destination for younger generations. Along with community aesthetic and infrastructure improvements and specific programs to attract youth and young professionals, these action areas combined serve as a potentially powerful combination of efforts to build a strong community ecosystem.

6.1.2 KEY ACTION AREAS

1. Launch Programs That Attract and Retain Youth and Young Professionals

It was evident in our many discussions with community residents and leaders, that Waseca is having difficulties retaining youth and attracting young professionals to work in the community. Besides the agricultural industry, providing job opportunities for young people has been a challenge. This exodus from rural communities is a nationwide trend known as the 'hollowing out of rural America' and many studies have been conducted to stem the tide. Community survey respondents identified youth activities as key to future community development.

2. Transform education system into lifelong learning

With recent community investment in the remodeling of Waseca High School, the community has shown its willingness to support its youth in education by providing top grade facilities. To build on this standard of excellence, Waseca could take steps towards connecting people with the best employment opportunities in the region and supporting a variety of skillsets. This will require an educational environment that promotes life-long learners; both in the job market and as a quality of life asset to all age groups, especially with the consistent need to update skills in a rapidly changing world.

3. Anchor the downtown as 'Heart' of the community

Waseca's downtown already has the hallmarks of a welcoming community center – from its pedestrian bump-outs and gateway elements to its pedestrian-scale lighting with banners, plant basket hangers and benches. Throughout the engagement sessions, community members indicated the need for the downtown to become more the 'heart' of community by creating a sense of vibrancy, activity and connectivity to other parts of the community and region. Like many retail environments, regular aesthetic upgrades to the main corridors helps refresh and activate these key areas. In addition, using wayfinding, striping, and other tools to create clear connections to regional assets can quickly enhance the ties between Waseca and its context.

4. Update community aesthetics and infrastructure

The issue of residential property development was repeatedly raised throughout the Waseca visioning process. The region has been faced with a number of development pressures and challenges across numerous areas and now is opportune time for Waseca to build its capacity to attract new residents based on the current challenges and opportunities presenting themselves. Combining this need with the updating of community spaces will go a long way to gaining and retaining community members.

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

Creating high quality community assets for Waseca will require a delicate balance of community needs. Through the engagement process, a sense of skepticism among community members was observed. Where there is a strong desire for change, leadership will need to provide clear communication and education about the details of the strategic action plan rollout.

DataInsight

6.1.3 IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT FOR CREATING HIGH QUALITY COMMUNITY ASSETS

SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS

2018

Launch Programs that Attract and Retain Youth and Young Professionals

- Develop housing options targeted at changing expectations and amenities for young workers and families.
- Create a program that connects local business owners with students to work on innovative 'maker' ideas that pertain to local business needs.

Transform Education System into Lifelong Learning

- Expand opportunities for cultural and educational training programs open to the community through organizations such as the Library, Arts Center, and Historical Society.
- Set up Waseca's own recreational programs for multiple generations (sports leagues, classes in parks, etc.)

Update Community Aesthetics and Infrastructure

- Create opportunities and initiatives that enhance aesthetic improvements along key driving corridors, parks, trails and in the maintenance of community facilities.
- Evaluate zoning and maintenance code requirements and enforcement to ensure they meet expectations for community aesthetics are aligned with community vision.
- Establish programs to address blighted and distressed residential properties through incentives, assistance and enhanced code enforcement.
- Install artwork in public spaces.

Anchor Downtown as the Heart of the Community

- Focus on creating next stage amenities when developing new infrastructure in the community.
- Encourage and incentivize reinvestment in downtown property.
- Create community spaces that allow for unstructured gatherings and social interactions as well as program regular activities, events and programming to draw visitors downtown.
- Hire a Downtown Mainstreet Coordinator to engage downtown business and property owners in exploring coordinated promotions, events and operational practices that encourage increased commercial activity downtown.

2030

BOLD IDEAS

- Establish a Community Vitality Strategic Action Area Leadership Committee tasked with overseeing the development of high quality community assets and making sure they are inline with the community vision.
- Encourage development of the downtown as the 'Heart of Waseca' to provide a sense of place and promote community pride. Make it a community gathering location and a place to stay for entertainment.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Connect with the University of MN's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at https://olli.umn.edu
- For insights on how communities may look in the future, visit: http://future-ia.com/project/cities-of-the-future/
- Pursue public-private Infrastructural investments at: http://www.nlc.org/sites/default/files/2016-12/NLC_2016_Infrastructure_Report.pdf

6.2   EXPAND AND LEVERAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

6.2.1   IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Economic development is key to creating a long-lasting vibrant, dynamic community. Helping businesses to grow and seeking out new and more established businesses will bring more jobs, and potentially high skilled jobs if technology and professional employment are targeted. Having recently lost a major employer in the area, Quad/Graphics, Waseca has the opportunity to embark on the path of becoming more experimental as a community as it moves into the knowledge/experience economy. In light of global trends in agriculture, Waseca is in a good position to use its strong agricultural sector as a starting point.

Waseca's strong agricultural sector provides enormous economic opportunity in light of the growing global need for food production over the next decades.

60%
INCREASED DEMAND BY 2050

FOOD

GLOBAL POPULATION GROWTH – 25% INCREASE BY 2050

ENERGY
50%

WATER
40%
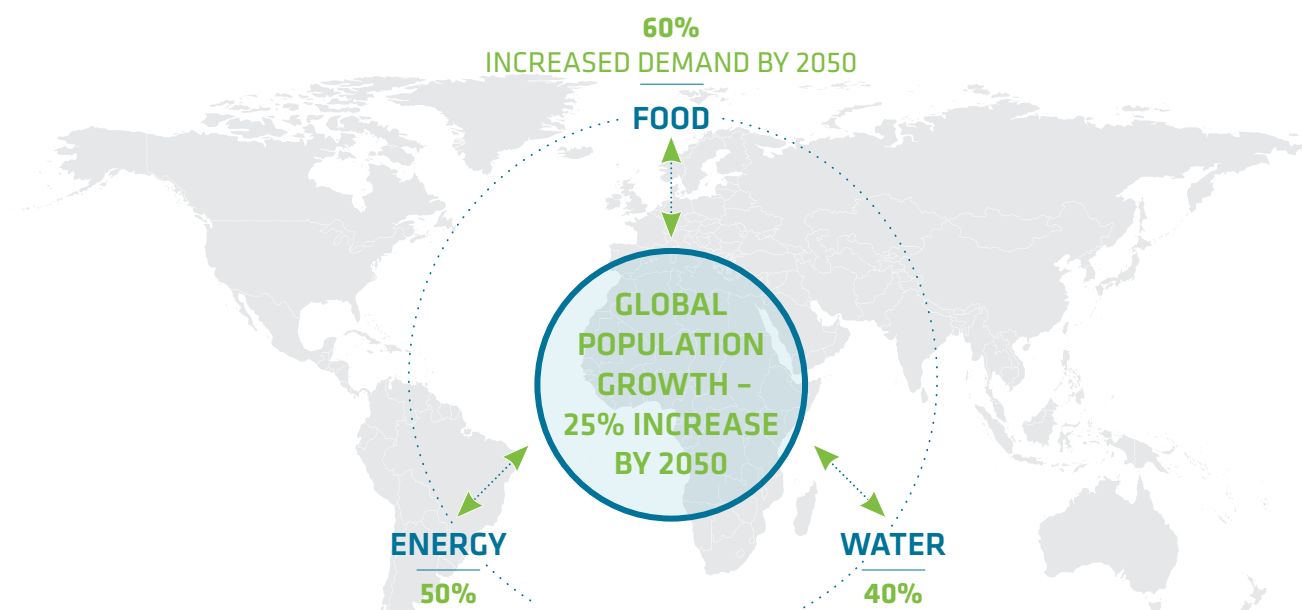
To begin the process of developing global opportunity for food production and consumption over the next decades, a plan containing metrics to measure success along the way should be created and revisited on an annual basis. To support this plan as well as outreach efforts to attract business, action plan focus group members agreed that a collaborative community marketing and branding initiative would help to focus efforts and present a unified image of Waseca.

"As we are pursuing economic growth and economic development, we have to make sure it happens with and by and for everyone. That everyone gets opportunity."

– Betsy Hodges, Former Mayor of Minneapolis, MN

6.2.2 KEY ACTION AREAS

1. Identify and establish a long-range plan with metrics for success

To implement economic development initiatives, the community will need a plan with a list of desired outcomes to focus energies on priority projects. This is an area where community collaboration among different businesses, industry sectors and local leadership will be crucial. Waseca can rely on B.E.S.T., the Chamber, University of Minnesota, County and local government to spearhead this endeavor, using local knowledge and regional connections.

2. Create a community marketing and branding initiative

The Think Tank Reconvene focus group highlighted a need to create a community marketing and branding initiative to update the tone and image of Waseca. This step was considered necessary to help build coherence, community pride, and a sense of place for the people of Waseca. The branding should incorporate the vision and preferred future for Waseca in order to build consistent messaging for the community.

3. Diversify and intensify the agriculture sector

The agricultural sector is historically a cornerstone of Waseca's economy. Although a relatively low-wage business in the area, collaboration with the University of Minnesota on projects might open the door to much higher-paying technology jobs. Diversifying the sector to include projects ranging from potentially revolutionary technology for wastewater cleaning to water pollutant removal techniques could enable Waseca to become a real-world laboratory for the regional and national agricultural sector. Waseca could also develop incentives packages and facilities targeted to biotechnology businesses, start-ups and research.

4. Expand technology, professional and business sectors

Waseca has traditionally embraced commercial development within the cities of Waseca, Janesville, New Richland and Waldorf. As part of the expansion and leveraging of economic development initiatives, survey respondents spoke of the importance expanding additional skillset levels of current Waseca business employment opportunities. These areas included emphasis on technology and professional sectors.

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

Survey data indicate a strong desire for economic development that connects people not only to local opportunities, but to the best careers in the region. This means that infrastructural amenities are an important part of economic development in anticipation that people also want to be able to raise their children and come home to Waseca from a regional job elsewhere.

Data**Insight**

6.2.3 IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT FOR EXPANDING AND LEVERAGING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

2018

SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS

Establish a Long-Range Economic Development Plan with Metrics for Success

- Ensure that all metrics for Waseca's Economic Development plan comply with the Waseca's community vision.
- Develop incentives packages and facilities targeted to biotechnology businesses, start-ups and research.

Create a Community Marketing and Branding Initiative

- Create a community marketing and branding initiative by establishing a subcommittee that will compile the necessary information needed to hire a communications firm to create a new, dynamic brand for the community.

Diversify and Intensify the Agricultural Sector

- Convene regional agricultural sector business meetings with the aim of building partnerships and collaborations among researchers in agricultural and biotechnology businesses for practical applications and development purposes.
- Develop partnerships with area higher education for training programs for high need skills for existing businesses and skillsets in demand by biotechnology and agricultural businesses.
- Utilize existing resources to connect businesses and organizations in the regional agricultural supply chain and build relationships with the community to encourage expanded regional business connectivity.

Expand Technology, Professional and Business Sectors

- Create new programs and partnerships that focus on the development of novel approaches to address environmental regulations and challenges; then use those new approaches to attract new businesses.
- Build skills training programming through higher education and community education to meet the community's future anticipated workforce needs.

2030

BOLD IDEAS

- Establish an Economic Development Strategic Action Area Leadership Committee tasked with creating a long-range Economic Development Plan for the community with metrics for success. The committee would determine priority projects, spearhead regional connections to bring in new businesses and align the plan with the community vision.
- Encourage the repurposing of buildings to create maker spaces for start ups in the agricultural and biotech industries.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Pursue a MN DEED Small Cities Dev. Program Comprehensive Grant at: https://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/community-funding/small-cities.jsp
- For more on the future food and agriculture, visit: http://future-iq.com/project/future-food-2016/
- Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy - A Tool for Small Cities and Towns at: https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/framework-creating-smart-growth-economic-development-strategy

6.3 STRENGTHEN REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

6.3.1 IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Demographic forecasts for growth in Waseca by 2035 indicate an increase for the city of Waseca but a decline in Waseca County over the same period. If achieving the goal of gaining and retaining significant population growth over time is to be a part of Waseca's vision and preferred future, then strengthening the infrastructure and connectivity to the region to support and attract that growth will be necessary.

Supported by its new marketing and branding initiative, the development of Waseca into a "Destination Location" will greatly boost its economic role in the region. Collaboration with other regional entities to encourage coordination of programming and parks and recreational development will lead to additional opportunities to develop Waseca's reputation for being a 'go-to' place in the region.

> *Waseca has remarkable destinational assets. Connecting these to the broader regional assets of the peri-urban space will make it a more relevant and desirable place to live and work.*
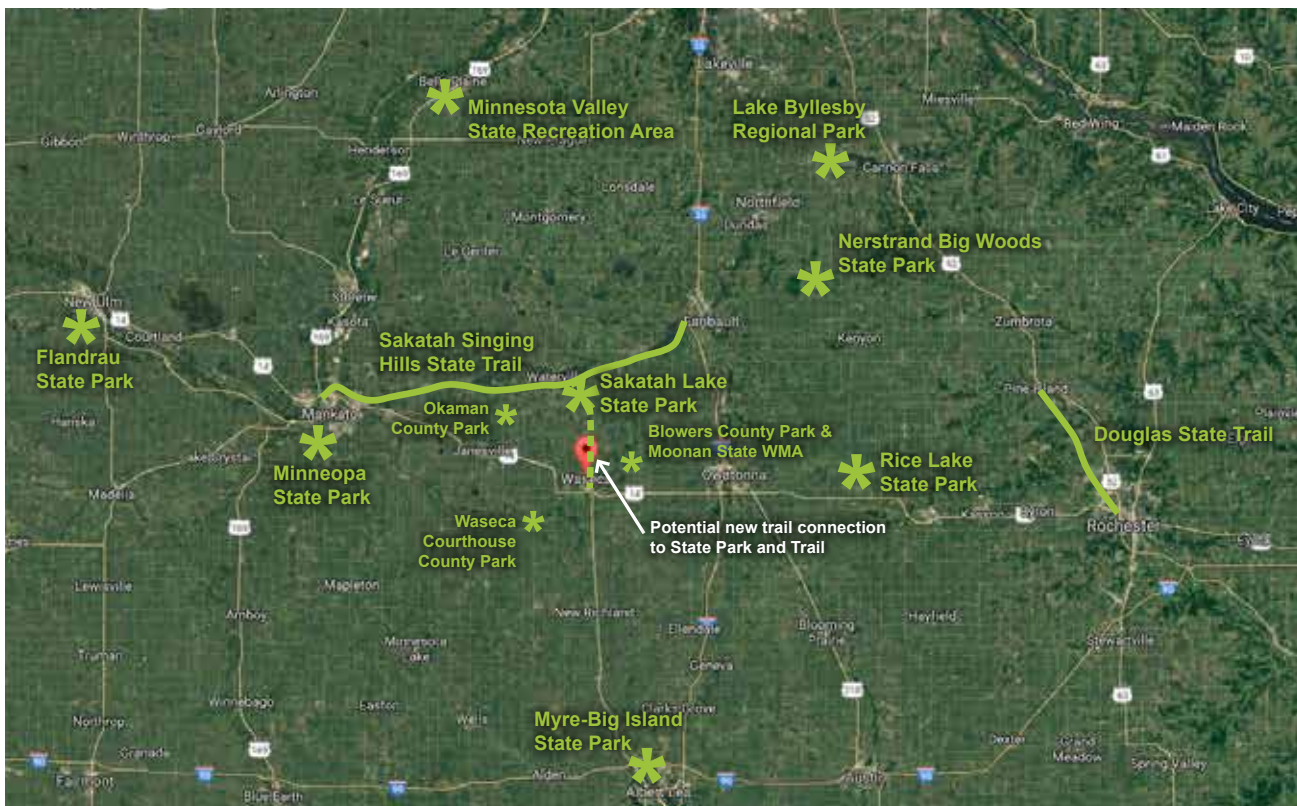
Waseca Area Regional Recreation Assets

"Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning."

– Benjamin Franklin

6.3.2   KEY ACTION AREAS

1.   Collaborate with regional entities to build connectivity

Survey results indicate a keen desire by community members to expand community development activities by integrating into the broader regional community fabric. A key point raised at the elected officials action plan meeting was that this would involve capitalizing on Waseca's industries as well as collaboration from all leadership to make this a successful endeavor. Taking the agricultural sector as an example, Waseca could connect local businesses into the regional agricultural supply chain focusing on initiatives to prioritize using regional suppliers and businesses.

2.   Expand higher education connections to attract regional innovation

The University of Minnesota has long had a presence in the Waseca community. Waseca also has strong ties with Mankato State University. Higher education's strong educational ties with the regional agricultural sector make it a natural conduit for the expansion of programs and innovation opportunities into the broader central and southern Minnesota regional areas.

3.   Build top grade infrastructure

The need to build top grade infrastructure that connects Waseca with the region was a repeated theme throughout the engagement process. 68% of survey respondents indicated support for top grade as opposed to basic infrastructure. Recent flooding made infrastructural issues front and center for many. To support regional connectivity, community members also placed an emphasis on enhanced transportation and housing options, as well as an interest in upgraded local development with regards to regional needs in mind.

4.   Become a 'Destination Location'

Developing Waseca's lakes, parks and trails into regional trail destinations is one way that Waseca could boost tax revenues to support the strategic action plan. Creating a point of destination for tourism and recreation would increase visitor traffic not only to the park system, but also to supporting industries and commercial areas. One specific example is to create development plans for Maplewood Park and the Northwest Nature Area to transform them into regional recreation attractions.

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

Survey and engagement input indicate a desire for Waseca to collaborate with regional entities to build connectivity. A specific concern of some community members is the need to continue to support local interests while this outward orientation occurs. This will involve a concerted effort on the part of Waseca leadership to provide outreach and education to community members about why the connectivity is necessary to achieve the preferred vision and how local needs will continue to be a priority.

DataInsight

6.3.3 IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT FOR STRENGTHENING REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS

2018

Collaborate with Regional Entities to Build Connectivity

- Develop timeline and funding stream for trail completion within City of Waseca and connection to regional trail systems.
- Seek MnDot's partnership in conducting a commuter study to explore commuter transportation services to Minneapolis-St. Paul and Southern Minnesota regional area.

Expand Higher Education Connections to attract Regional Innovation

- Actively collaborate with higher education facilities to promote innovative agricultural research programs in the broader regional area.

Build Top Grade Infrastructure

- Create a development plan for the South Interchange as a Gateway to the Community, focusing on retail and commercial services to attract regional visitors and highway traffic.
- Upgrade infrastructure by extending utilities to the West Interchange to allow for industrial growth.
- Continue updating of aging infrastructure to protect existing development and encourage future development and regional connectivity.
- Develop pedestrian loops as part of a master pedestrian plan for the community.

Become a 'Destination Location'

- Develop parks, recreation and tourism master plan to identify development of events, activities and recreational opportunities to draw visitors from the region.
- Create development plans for Maplewood Park and Northwest Nature Area to transform them into regional recreational attractions.
- Develop and invest in plans to address water quality issues at Clear Lake and add water-based activities to attract visitors and local investment.

2030

BOLD IDEAS

- Establish a Regional Connectivity Strategic Action Area Leadership Committee tasked with promoting Waseca's assets to integrate into the broader regional fabric and building Waseca's reputation and leadership in the region.
- Encourage development of Waseca's image as a 'Destination Location' in the region using the results of the Strategic Plan's new marketing and branding initiative.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- See two similar recent transportation studies in MN at: https://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/reports/system-studies/index.html
- MnDot Office of Transit and Active Transportation funding at: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/grants/5310/index.html
- Pedestrian plans: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/plan/

6.4   CREATE A VIBRANT DYNAMIC COMMUNITY

6.4.1   IMPORTANCE OF A VIBRANT DYNAMIC COMMUNITY

The creation of a vibrant, dynamic community is an imperative outcome of the strategic action plan. Waseca is currently doing many of the things that will lead to this preferred future, but it needs to do more to avoid being trapped behind the rapid speed of change occurring in the world today. Leveraging the power of collaborative leadership and action will be key; as will the promotion of connectivity and the development of a climate of creativity and innovation. To provide alignment of actions, Waseca must insist on its vision informing decision making.

Waseca has demonstrated throughout the visioning process a high level of engagement and collaboration. This has provided a tremendous foundation in laying the groundwork for implementation of the Strategic Action Plan.

It is important to remember that the elements of this plan are strongly supported by all cohorts of the Waseca community. Given the cohesive mandate for change clearly indicated by engagement process results, a sense of urgency will be required for leadership to carry out the Waseca vision and strategic action plan. Hopes are high for community leaders to take action quickly to put Waseca on the path to a vibrant, dynamic community soon.

"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

– Phil Jackson, Former Coach and NBA Basketball Player

6.4.2   KEY ACTION AREAS

1.   Leverage governmental collaboration and cooperation

The final strategic action planning meeting held in December included elected officials from the City of Waseca, Waseca County, and the Waseca School District. This was the first meeting in 10 years to bring together all three entities. During that meeting, all officials committed to advocate and support the roll-out of the strategic plan as well as meetings on a quarterly basis to provide feedback and collaboration on initiatives that need outreach assistance. This type of collaboration is exactly what will be needed for the success of the strategic action plan.

2.   Activate strong leadership to encourage collaboration between organizations

The strategic planning process has already begun to activate strong leadership and collaboration between organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and B.E.S.T. of Waseca. This type of collaboration should be encouraged throughout Waseca to incorporate various community interests and to be sure that all voices are being heard. Enhanced communication, collaboration and programming coordination among cultural and recreational organizations will better serve residents by preventing redundant and overlapping programs.

3.   Promote social connectivity within the community

A vibrant, dynamic community is supported by strong networks of community members. Whether through school, business, government, religious institutions, neighborhoods, etc., connectivity is key to building positive, collaborative environments that support collective action. Incorporating a culture of visioning helps to give common cause to this social connectivity and builds pride and ownership through increased communication and robust engagement.

4.   Foster entrepreneurship and encourage innovation

By fostering an environment of entrepreneurship and innovation, Waseca has an opportunity to become a regional leader in new technology and research when combining efforts with the University of Minnesota and other higher education. Waseca can also use the mandate given to develop the downtown area with new types of businesses and working spaces for entrepreneurs to help build its 'heart' with younger, vibrant activity.

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

In a community, there are lots of voices. What is important from all of the engagement results is that there are tight points of consensus around the preferred future for Waseca and leadership needs to emphasize that consensus when talking about decisions made to carry out the strategic action plan. Remember the concentrations.

Data**Insight**

6.4.3 IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT FOR CREATING A VIBRANT DYNAMIC COMMUNITY

SPECIFIC ACTION STEPS

2018

Leverage Governmental Collaboration and Cooperation

- Evaluate shared and consolidated service opportunities among local governments to increase efficiency, better coordinate services and provide for long-term planning.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive contact list of shared services between counties and cities and update it annually to ensure coordination of services.

Activate Leadership to Encourage Collaboration between Organizations

- Enhance communication, collaboration and programming coordination among cultural and recreational organizations to better reach residents and cut down on program overlap.

Promote Social Connectivity within the Community

- Actively seek community input on major initiatives and program enhancements through coordinated institutional communications.
- Develop comprehensive communication plans and practices to ensure an informed and engaged community.
- Encourage walking and biking within the community.
- Follow a Healthy Community Checklist to ensure an overall healthy community orientation.

Foster Entrepreneurships and Encourage Innovation

- Identify and engage existing and up-and-coming leaders in the community with key leadership roles in the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan.
- Work with school system and library to develop a coding educational program to connect students to the business community and build entrepreneurial spirit at a young age.
- Encourage and incentivize the establishment of start-up companies in Waseca.
- Institute a mentorship program between existing businesses and emerging businesses to provide support and guidance.

2030

BOLD IDEAS

- Establish an Intergovernmental Collaboration Strategic Action Area Leadership Committee consisting of the committed members of the December 2017 Action Plan Focus Group. The Committee would be tasked with aligning all decision-making with the community vision and reporting out to the community in an annual 'Report Card'.
- Convene an annual 'Idea Summit' to collect original input on community development planning.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- To follow the Healthy Community Checklist, see: https://www.hennepin.us/-/media/hennepinus/your-government/projects-initiatives/active-living/FINAL_CHECKLIST_ComprehensivePlanningForAHealthyCommunity_May24-2017.pdf?la=en
- Toolkit to support entrepreneurs and small business: https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ineap/RI_SmallBizToolkit-2012-Web.pdf

Waseca leadership has been given a definite mandate to initiate the changes needed to achieve the Preferred Future. Now is the time to build on the opportunities available to the community.

7.0   OPPORTUNITY AND RISK ANALYSIS

Throughout the engagement process, participants explored those actions that could potentially drive Waseca towards or away from the preferred future identified in the scenario planning process. Although unforeseen events and opportunities may present themselves and cause readjustments along the way, the key to a successful plan will be avoiding the pitfalls of known steps that will take the organization off the path to its preferred future. Combining input from the various engagement activities, below are some markers that may be used as Waseca follows its roadmap.

What will drive us TOWARDS the preferred future?	What will drive us AWAY from the preferred future?
Following through on Waseca's new strategic action plan in a timely manner	Inaction; lack of engagement from leadership and community members
Building a common understanding of community priorities	Poor communication by leadership to community members
New regional connections and collaboration	Leadership pursuing self-interested agendas
Education and communication about the shared vision for Waseca	Destructive internal competition among community groups
Addition of events and programs that bring people into downtown Waseca	Actions taken without the Waseca community vision in mind
Creating a culture of visioning	Lack of funding support for plan initiatives
Creation of additional jobs in the community	Poor services development
Collaborative strength through effective leadership	
Agricultural sector development	
Enhanced community aesthetics along key corridors and in gathering spaces	

"Good management is the art of making problems so interesting and their solutions so constructive that everyone wants to get to work and deal with them."
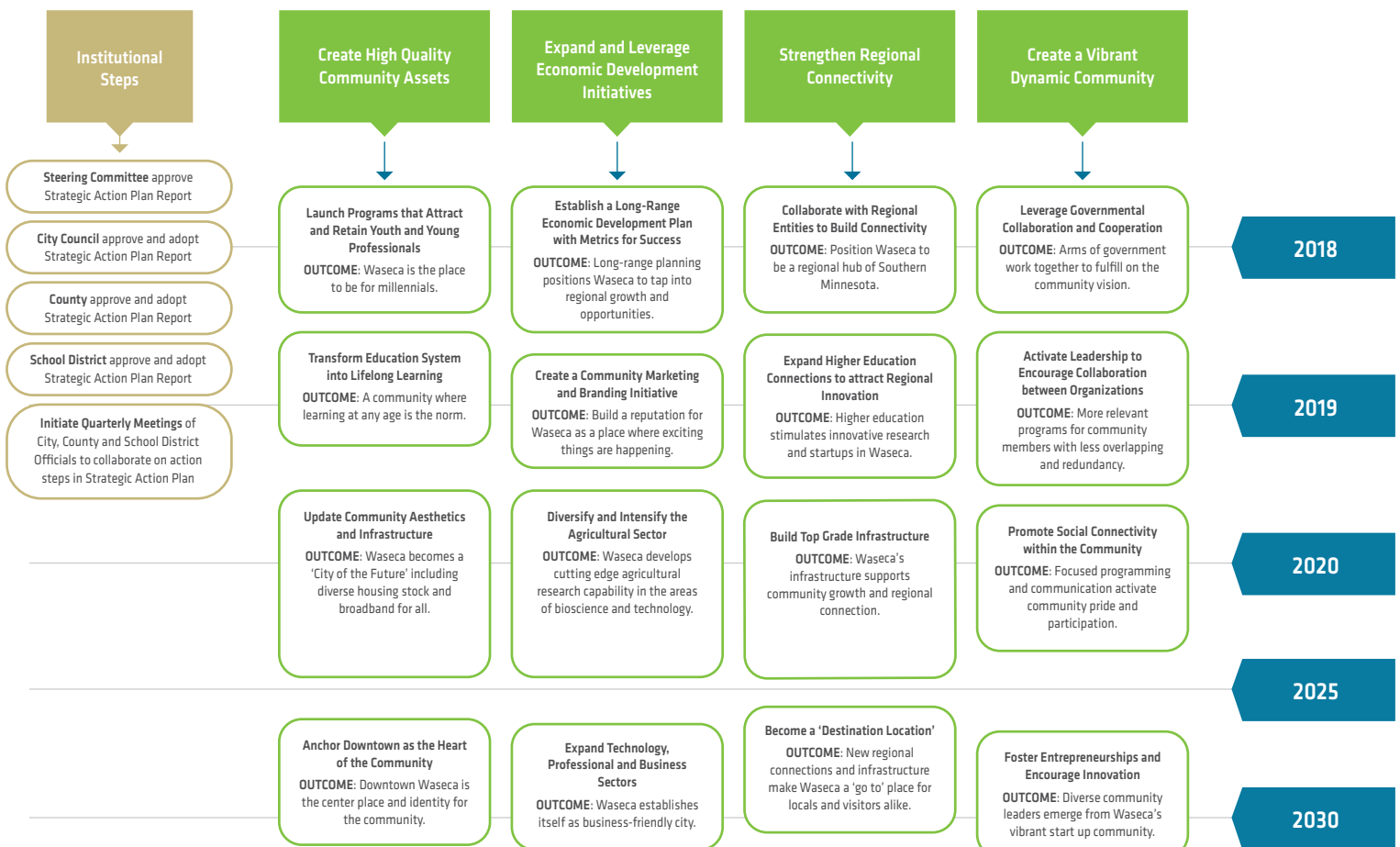
– Paul Hawken, Author

The Road Map will only be achievable with the consistent engagement of all stakeholders.

8.0   ROAD MAP

Waseca's Strategic Action Plan Road Map lays out a high level recommended sequencing of actions that support Waseca's community vision for the future. The road map is spread out over the next decade, with incremental progressive steps that can build significant progress over time. The placement of the action areas on the timeline are notational and should be discussed and approved by community leadership at a future date. The speed of change and actual roll-out of activities and projects will depend on multiple variables and priorities as established by the leadership and community members of Waseca.

Waseca Strategic Action Plan Road Map

Institutional Steps	Create High Quality Community Assets	Expand and Leverage Economic Development Initiatives	Strengthen Regional Connectivity	Create a Vibrant Dynamic Community	
Steering Committee approve Strategic Action Plan Report	**Launch Programs that Attract and Retain Youth and Young Professionals** OUTCOME: Waseca is the place to be for millennials.	**Establish a Long-Range Economic Development Plan with Metrics for Success** OUTCOME: Long-range planning positions Waseca to tap into regional growth and opportunities.	**Collaborate with Regional Entities to Build Connectivity** OUTCOME: Position Waseca to be a regional hub of Southern Minnesota.	**Leverage Governmental Collaboration and Cooperation** OUTCOME: Arms of government work together to fulfill on the community vision.	**2018**
City Council approve and adopt Strategic Action Plan Report					
County approve and adopt Strategic Action Plan Report					
School District approve and adopt Strategic Action Plan Report	**Transform Education System into Lifelong Learning** OUTCOME: A community where learning at any age is the norm.	**Create a Community Marketing and Branding Initiative** OUTCOME: Build a reputation for Waseca as a place where exciting things are happening.	**Expand Higher Education Connections to attract Regional Innovation** OUTCOME: Higher education stimulates innovative research and startups in Waseca.	**Activate Leadership to Encourage Collaboration between Organizations** OUTCOME: More relevant programs for community members with less overlapping and redundancy.	**2019**
Initiate Quarterly Meetings of City, County and School District Officials to collaborate on action steps in Strategic Action Plan	**Update Community Aesthetics and Infrastructure** OUTCOME: Waseca becomes a 'City of the Future' including diverse housing stock and broadband for all.	**Diversify and Intensify the Agricultural Sector** OUTCOME: Waseca develops cutting edge agricultural research capability in the areas of bioscience and technology.	**Build Top Grade Infrastructure** OUTCOME: Waseca's infrastructure supports community growth and regional connection.	**Promote Social Connectivity within the Community** OUTCOME: Focused programming and communication activate community pride and participation.	**2020**
					2025
	Anchor Downtown as the Heart of the Community OUTCOME: Downtown Waseca is the center place and identity for the community.	**Expand Technology, Professional and Business Sectors** OUTCOME: Waseca establishes itself as business-friendly city.	**Become a 'Destination Location'** OUTCOME: New regional connections and infrastructure make Waseca a 'go to' place for locals and visitors alike.	**Foster Entrepreneurships and Encourage Innovation** OUTCOME: Diverse community leaders emerge from Waseca's vibrant start up community.	**2030**

Waseca's path to its preferred future will be achieved in consistent progressive steps.

9.0   KEY METRICS TO MEASURE PROGRESS

Understanding and measuring progress will be an important part of implementing the Strategic Action Plan. The measures should address the plan's action areas and include leading and lagging indicators. Used correctly, such metrics can provide a powerful feedback loop to understanding the effectiveness of investment in programs and identify emerging gaps. The following metrics can be built around the four key strategic pillars of the plan:

- New opportunities for youth and young professionals
- Increase in younger demographic within Waseca
- Availability of additional housing options appealing to mixed demographics
- Expanded educational opportunities for all ages
- Increased downtown use and business
- Expanded job opportunities for all cohorts
- Established community marketing and branding efforts

- Updated community infrastructure
- Participation in the region as a leader in collaborative programs
- Increased tourist and visitor traffic
- Additional higher education presence in Waseca
- Additional community programs sponsored by collaborating organizations
- Increased entrepreneurial and innovation opportunities for business
- Increased leadership involvement in regional activities

This does not represent the entire list of likely recommended metrics, but is intended to show the overall framework and concept. In developing and using such metrics, it is important to consider benchmarking progress using a comparison over time. By comparing progress of the action areas at different points in time, the metrics will give an indication of the trajectory of that item.

Lastly, it is important to note that strategic plans are 'living documents' specific to each community and that this plan will require not only alignment with past planning, but an honest, in-depth look ahead to the continually evolving aspirations of all Waseca stakeholders for the future.

"The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with but whether it is the same problem you had last year."

*– John Foster Dulles, Former U.S. Secretary of State*

10.0 LOOKING AHEAD: TOPICS FOR THE FUTURE

Planning for the future requires looking ahead to anticipate how trends and global events of today will impact us all in the future. Below are two areas we believe will provide Waseca with significant opportunities for development growth as well as position the community to become a regional player in the U.S. Midwest.

10.1 THE ARC OF INNOVATION

Waseca lies in the middle of a massive arc of innovation occurring around the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolis.   The concept of the arc of innovation refers to the vitality and dynamic that occurs in the large multi-functional concentric circles radiating out from large city centers. It is within these arcs of innovation where assembly and distribution, production and research will increasingly intensify and where the Waseca community has the greatest opportunity.

Arc of Innovation
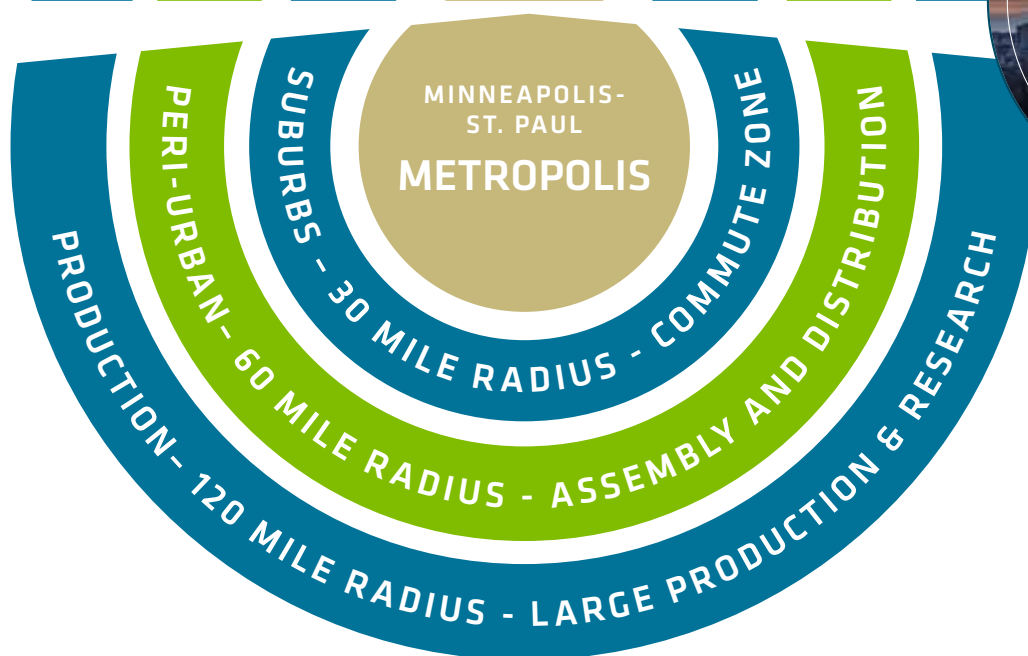
10.2 THE FUTURE OF FOOD

Waseca's agricultural sector has long been a driver in the community's economy. Our analysis points to enormous potential and change driven by the challenge for feeding the world. With a growing global population and the draining of many finite resources, the U.S. Midwest is positioned to become one of the leading dynamic areas in the production of food. The map below illustrates solid biomass resources by County in the U.S. These resources, along with the fact that the Midwest holds 20% of the world's fresh water resources, make it an ideal place for the thoughtful sustainable development of the food industry.

Waseca's agricultural assets hold great promise for the regional economy. The community has great potential to leverage these assets and build dynamic bio and food base industries of the future.


Solid Biomass Resources by County
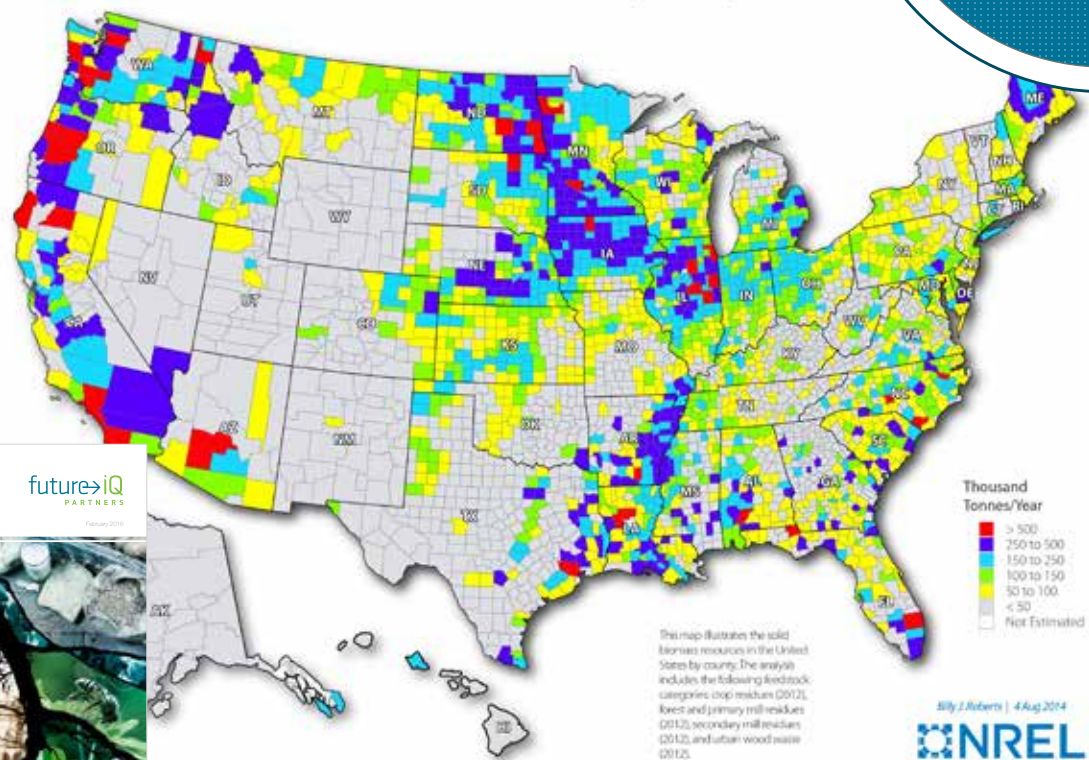
To find out more about the future of food, please see:

http://future-iq.com/project/future-food-2016/

"Providing food and nutrition for 9 billion people without compromising the global environment will be one of the greatest challenges our civilization has ever faced…It will require the imagination determination and hard work of countless people from all over the world, embarked on one of the most important causes in history. So let's work together to make it happen. There is no time to lose."

– Jon Foley, University of Minnesota, 12 October 2011. Solutions for a cultivated planet. GLI Publications (Emily Dombeck)
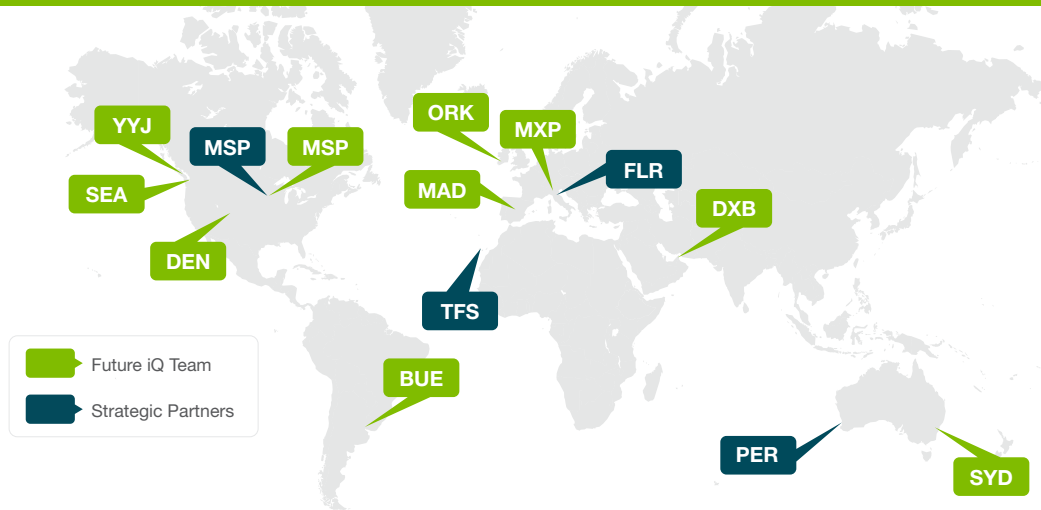
11.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ specializes in the development and application of scenario planning, network analysis, industry and regional analysis, and stakeholder engagement. The company specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist organizations, regions and industries plan for the future.

To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects visit www.future-iq.com or by email at info@future-iq.com

Waseca Vision and Strategic Action Plan Prepared By:

DAVID BEURLE, CEO, FUTURE IQ PARTNERS

As CEO of Future iQ, David specializes in creating future planning approaches for the use in regional, community and organizational settings. David has worked in the field of organizational, industry and regional planning for over 20 years. His work in community and economic development has earned his work international, national and state awards.

HEATHER BRANIGIN, VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Heather has worked in the fields of Development and Education for over 20 years. She has extensive experience in local government and growing small business and organizations, and is an accomplished project manager, research analyst and writer. Heather is Past President and current Advisory Council Member of the United Nations Association of Minnesota and is committed to encouraging international understanding and global collaboration.

12.0 ABOUT LHB

LHB is a multi-disciplinary engineering, architecture, and planning firm known for its design leadership and loyalty to its clients. LHB are experts in public works, pipeline, industrial, housing healthcare, government, education, and commercial design. Since 1966, LHB has been dedicated to being environmentally responsible, reducing long term operating costs, and improving the quality of life for clients.

LYDIA MAJOR, PLA, LEED AP

With an academic background in Landscape Architecture and English, Lydia works with clients and communities to create vibrant public, commercial, and residential places. She uses a collaborative design process to develop solutions that benefit the client, the community and the environment.

MICHAEL A. FISCHER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT / PROJECT PRINCIPAL

Michael has 31 years of experience a project principal, project manager, project designer, and project architect on planning, urban design, educational, commercial and governmental projects. He has become an expert on Tax Increment Finance District analysis assisting over 100 cities with strategic planning for TIF Districts. He is a Senior Vice President at LHB and currently leads the Minneapolis office.

13.0 B.E.S.T. OF WASECA COUNTY, MINNESOTA

The Business and Entrepreneurial Support Team of Waseca County (B.E.S.T.) in collaboration with the City of Waseca, Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce, Waseca County, Mayo Clinic Health system-Waseca and Waseca Public Schools have determined that it is critical for the greater Waseca Community to have a common Vision and plan to achieve it for the community. Each of these organizations have their own strategic plans and objectives, but shared vision and values are needed to better unify and coordinate efforts, enable better communication about what the community is and where it is going, and provide a unified voice for where the community needs to invest to get it to its destination. The Waseca Vision 2030 project aimed to articulate and plan for a shared vision, and this project was the first step in the process to create the community road map towards a preferred future for generations to come.

14.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Future iQ and LHB would like to thank the Waseca Community Visioning Steering Committee and Danny Lenz for the significant time and effort put into the planning and execution of this project. We would also like to thank the Mayor and City Council of Waseca, School Board and the Board of County Commissioners who met and committed to build the future vision for Waseca together. We sincerely appreciate your contributions.

The dedication and professionalism of Waseca city staff, the mayor and council, school board and county commissioners and staff are a big asset to the community.

Waseca Vision 2030 Steering Committee Members

- Dave Dunn
- Jenifer Dvorak
- Ann Fitch
- Neil Fruechte
- Emily Hildebrandt

- Marty Johnson
- John Katz
- Pastor Kristi Mitchell
- Blair Nelson
- Amy Potter, Secretary

- Tom Sankovitz, Co-Chair
- Jon Stagman
- Juan Valencia
- Randy Zimmerman, Co-Chair

Waseca Vision 2030 Steering Committee Advisors

- Roger Ashland, SBDC, SCORE
- David Beurle, Future iQ
- Tom Borowski, Mayo Health-Clinic Waseca

- Heather Branigin, Future iQ
- Mike Fischer, LHB
- Kim Foels, Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce
- Jim Gibson, B.E.S.T. of Waseca County

- Tom Lee, Waseca Public Schools
- Danny Lenz, City of Waseca
- Lydia Major, LHB

15.0 FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on this report and Waseca Vision 2030, please contact:

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City of Waseca

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To further explore Waseca's survey data visualization capacity, please visit Future iQ's Lab Portal project page under the Engagement Tab at: http://lab.future-iq.com/waseca-vision-2030/engagement/

FOR MORE DETAILS, AND TO ACCESS COPIES OF ADDITIONAL REPORTS, PLEASE VISIT:

www.future-iq.com

Waseca Community Profile and Benchmark Analysis
April 2017

Waseca Vision 2030 Scenario-Based Think Tank Workshop Report
May 2017

Waseca Vision 2030 Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan
February 2018