

Waite Park

2019 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT



www.waiteparkmpls.org



Project description

The Waite Park Community Council (WPCC) serves as a forum to support the interests of the Waite Park neighborhood to maintain high quality of life through community engagement. Waite Park is located in the northeast corner of the City of Minneapolis and is home to over 5000 residents. Waite Park has several parks, a community garden and Waite Park Elementary School. The boundaries of the neighborhood are 37th Avenue to the north, Saint Anthony Parkway to the south, Central Avenue to the West, and Stinson Avenue to the east.

In summer 2019, the Waite Park Community Council conducted a community survey and door knocking campaign to learn from residents about their wishes and concerns for the neighborhood, as well as their feedback about the Community Council's efforts. The council's goal was to develop programs to support that vision.

WPCC conducted an online survey in June, July and August with 221 responses. The door knocking campaign yielded another 150 responses.

WPCC contracted with Scott Chazdon and Ella Weber, evaluation staff at the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality, to analyze the assessment data and write this report. The evaluation team used Microsoft Excel and SPSS to analyze the numeric data, and Dedoose qualitative analysis software to analyze the open ended questions from the survey and door knocking.

This report highlights the key findings from the survey and door knocking, organized around the following topics:

- **What residents want - characteristics of an ideal neighborhood**
- **Wishes for Waite Park Community Council programming**
- **Ideas for building community**
- **Uses of housing funds and other existing programs**
- **Feedback about Waite Park Community Council communications**
- **Participant demographics and data tables**

Where relevant, the report highlights differences in opinion or preference of longer-term versus newer Waite Park residents.

Findings at a glance

IDEAL COMMUNITY



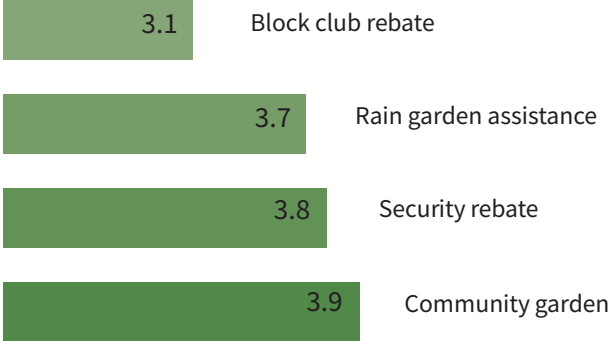
WISHES FOR WPCC



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

AVERAGE IMPORTANCE OF CURRENT PROGRAMS (n=221)

Rated on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important.



COMMUNICATION



The survey included questions about the importance of specific amenities and services for residents, using a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important. As seen in the chart below, access to park space had the highest importance rating among all survey respondents, while access to high quality schools, relationships among neighbors, and access to transit also have average ratings above 4 on the five point scale. Recreational opportunities for families with young children were also highly important.

When we compared the results based on length of residence in the community (these tables can be found in the Appendix), we found that longer term residents viewed recreational opportunities for seniors as significantly more important than newer residents. This is likely because longer term residents were older and more interested in these opportunities.

Both the survey and doorknocking participants offered open-ended responses to a question about

the attributes of an ideal neighborhood.

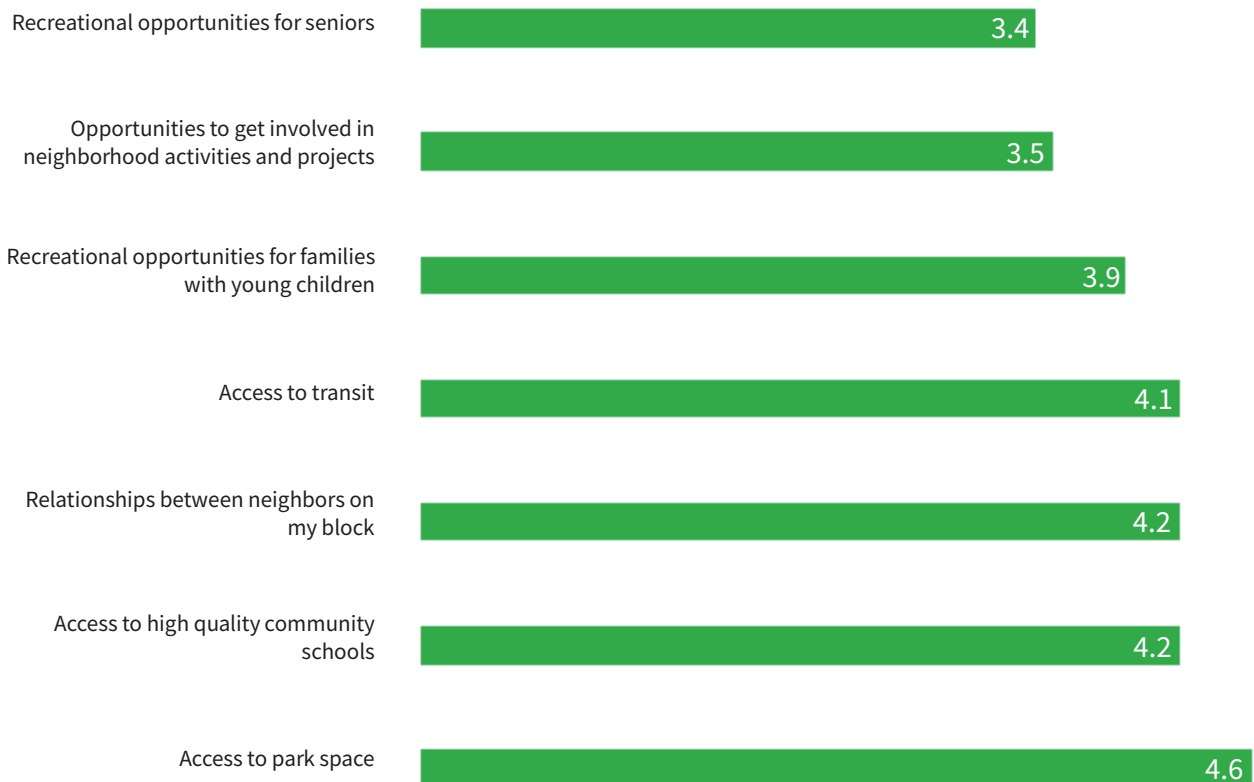
We examined these responses and grouped them into the categories shown in the table below (page 6) and the word cloud above (page 3). The larger the size of each item in the word cloud, the more people responded in that category.

While park space, neighborliness, access to high quality schools and transit were strongly emphasized in both the survey and the open-ended comments, it was clear that a vibrant local business community, safety, diversity, and local events and gatherings were also very important attributes of an ideal neighborhood.

Most of these items were mentioned fairly consistently by residents with different lengths of residence. There were a few notable differences based on length of residence -- functional municipal services, high level ownership, support for elderly more often mentioned by longer term residents; green, environmentally aware more often mentioned by newer residents.

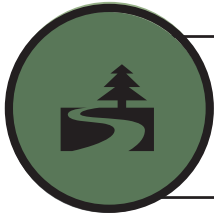
NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES BY IMPORTANCE

Rated on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important.



What residents want

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD



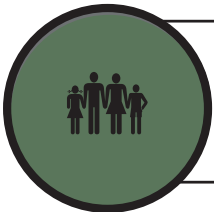
**Green public spaces,
gardens and parks**

“The neighborhood has lots of community activities that are well-advertised - school fundraisers, farmers markets, craft fairs. Gathering places like parks and community centers are well-maintained. Renters and homeowners are regularly invited to participate in neighborhood activities.”



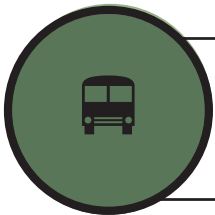
Friendly and neighborly

“The neighbors, the progressive culture, new families with lots of kids bring new energy to the neighborhood, increasing diversity.”



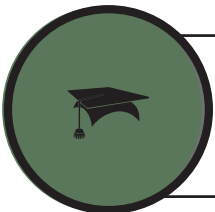
Diversity

“Diversity! A variety of restaurants, churches, family owned businesses and shops. Community engaged schools. Neighbors who know each other and help each other out. People who smile and say hi to each other. Interactive community gathering places - parks, libraries, etc.”



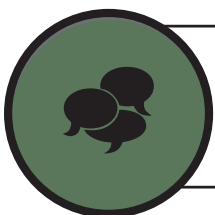
**Transportation access,
walkable & bikeable**

“Bike-friendly, walkable, with fast and frequent public transit options.”



Safe, low crime

“I imagine a healthy, thriving neighborhood is one where neighbors watch out for one another, treat others with respect, take care of their property (inside and out), and are open to changes and different cultures.”



Engaged residents

“People are out in their yards or in the street talking to one another...people have formed block clubs or a neighborhood club devoted to adopting storm drains and environmental issues...we need to be thinking about the future.”

By the numbers

NUMBER OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES, BY CATEGORY



[My ideal neighborhood has] "gatherings, whether in the street or at the local watering hole. A desire to be in the neighborhood on the weekends so you can connect with your friends, rather than strangers who live near you. This means gathering spots to share a drink or a meal any time of day. Places to create a shared sense of what it means to live in Waite Park."



"My ideal neighborhood is a diverse place with families from all walks of life that are able to cohabitate. I envision a neighborhood that is environmentally conscious and takes steps to preserve water and resources. I envision a cooperative neighborhood."

FRIENDLY AND NEIGHBORLY	134
VIBRANT LOCAL BUSINESSES WITH SHOPS AND CAFES	105
GREEN PUBLIC SPACES, GARDENS AND PARKS	100
SAFE, LOW CRIME	90
QUIET	78
CLEAN, WELL MAINTAINED	69
EASY TRANSPORTATION ACCESS, WALKABLE AND BIKE FRIENDLY	57
DIVERSE	45
EVENTS AND GATHERINGS	31
GOOD SCHOOLS	26
MIX OF AGES	25
PROXIMITY TO DOWNTOWN	25
ENGAGED RESIDENTS	20
AFFORDABLE	14
GREEN, ENVIRONMENTALLY AWARE	11
HIGH LEVEL OF HOME OWNERSHIP	11
PEOPLE OUTSIDE	9
ARTS COMMUNITY	6
RESPONSIVE ELECTED OFFICIALS	6
ACCESS TO INFORMATION	5
SUPPORT ELDERLY	2
LONG-TERM RESIDENTS	1

Wishes for WPCC

The survey asked participants to rate the importance of a range of programs that have been offered by neighborhood organizations like WPCC. Waite Park respondents rated programs such as home sustainability and home repair as the most important, along with help accessing public programs. Several other educational and community building efforts were also seen as important, such as providing opportunities for neighbors to build relationships, learning about gardening and landscaping, and learning about political issues, policies and programs that impact the community.

For the most part, people with different lengths of residence in the community had similar responses about the types of programming that were most important. However, there were some notable differences:

1. Longer-term residents placed more importance on recreational events for seniors.
2. Residents who have lived in the community for six to ten years were less likely than newer or longer-term residents to think that help accessing public programs or learning about political issues were important.
3. Newer residents placed more importance on activities for adults with no kids, home purchase assistance, low income housing, and welcoming.
4. Longer-term residents placed more emphasis on limitations on safety, rental housing, turnover of problem properties, programs for seniors, and support for local schools (see data tables in Appendix).



Gatherings

"More block parties, focus on social events. If we're going to be a welcoming neighborhood, that means welcoming to everyone."



Road Maintenance

"The roads are a problem. Would like to see walkability increased and better transit."



Promote safety

"Host neighborhood gatherings and enlist neighborhood crime prevention hosts."



More green space

"Scholarships for low-income people to use the community garden. Community gardens in more parks where people work together to grow food."



Better communication

"It would be great if people on blocks exchange names and phone numbers so they could be in touch."



More local businesses/commercial development

"More commerce - bars and restaurants and Johnson Street businesses. More excuses to get to know neighbors and meet people around. [It would be an] opportunity to connect with surrounding neighborhoods like Audubon."

Suggested activities

When we examined the open-ended responses from the door-knocking and survey, we found even stronger support for community-building activities and gatherings sponsored by WPCC. Many neighbors shared a desire for more events aimed at adults without children, especially young and middle-aged adults. Concerns about accessibility were also raised, including making spaces more welcoming to people of different physical abilities and catering to dietary restrictions. The table below highlights examples of suggested activities put forward by community members.

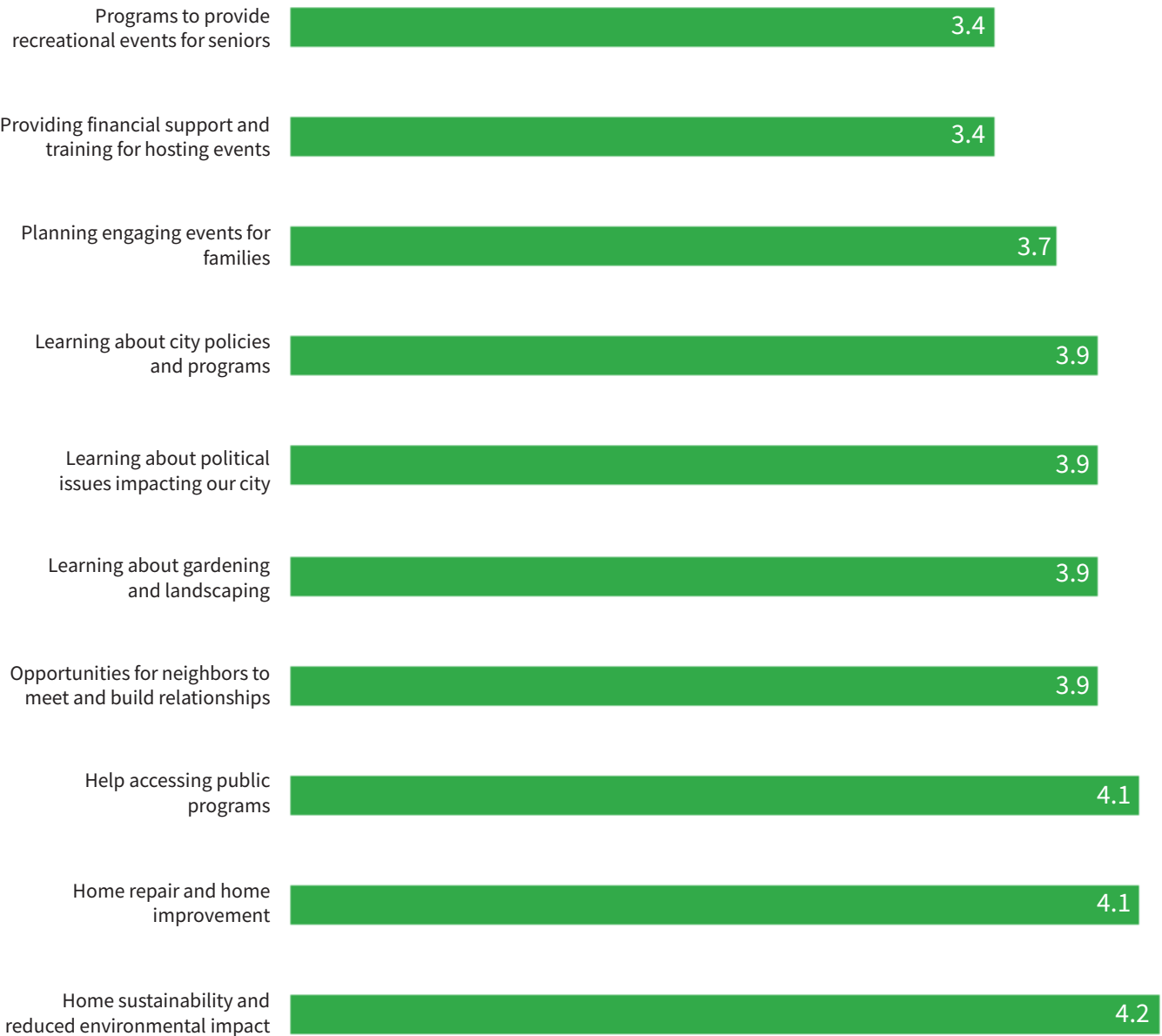
Social events and gatherings	Movies in the park; block parties; activities at Cavell Park and Demming Heights; cookouts; 4th of July fireworks; Open Streets; theme parties; neighborhood cleanup; mom's group
Activities for adults without children	Trivia; Happy hour and brewery meetups; White Elephant or holiday gift exchange; morning coffee meetup
Arts and culture activities	Cooking or preserving classes, including shared meal; music in the park; musical performances; mural painting; art shows; utility box painting; history walking tour
Skill-building and sharing activities	Collaborations with tool library; courses or information for new homeowners i.e. "Homeownership 101"; workshops with local businesses or skilled neighbors i.e. construction, landscaping, gardening, and eco-friendly projects; leadership development
Recreational activities	Running club; walking club; XC skiing club; biking club; IM sports for adults; lawn games (croquet, bocci ball, etc.), yoga, skate park
Connections with new neighbors	Neighbor directory with contact information; welcome committee to greet new neighbors; maps and local info; courses or information for new neighbors i.e. "MPLS 101"



"People move from rural areas and other places so it would be helpful [to provide information] on how to settle into an urban environment. MPLS 101. Who to ask for what? Homeowner 101. How to navigate cultural issues. [We could have] historical talk on houses in the neighborhood...neighbors want to know the history of their neighborhood and homes."

"[I'd like to see] more events like National Night Out, but not police focused. More information on ways to get neighbors together. More ways to connect adults... events that are not kid centric"

EXISTING PROGRAMS BY IMPORTANCE



"Create opportunities for neighborhood exchange/sharing and requests for support - i.e. could our block have a yard equipment sharing program, or a tool for which seniors could ask for help shoveling their walks in the winter? I love the rain garden program and any help or support with landscaping, especially low-maintenance, local plants. Also, the home improvement rebate opportunities are awesome!"

By the numbers

NUMBER OF OPEN ENDED RESPONSES, BY CATEGORY

GATHERINGS	88
WELCOMING, PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNITY BUILDING	82
HOME IMPROVEMENT, ENERGY EFFICIENCY	79
ROAD MAINTENANCE	75
PROMOTE SAFETY	58
MORE GREEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS	51
BETTER COMMUNICATIONS	50
MORE LOCAL BUSINESSES/COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT	48
LOW INCOME HOUSING	32
MAINTAIN/IMPROVE PARKS AND TRAILS	30
PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN	28
HOME SECURITY	25
ADVOCATE FOR OUR COMMUNITY	23
ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS WITHOUT KIDS	18
IMPROVE ENFORCEMENT OF REGULATIONS	15
PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS	15
RAIN GARDENS	14
SUPPORT LOCAL SCHOOLS	13
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE	9
HOME PURCHASE ASSISTANCE	9
NETWORKING TO HELP CONNECT WITH LOCAL CONTRACTORS	7
ART PROJECTS	6
LIMIT RENTALS/PROMOTE HOME OWNERSHIP	4
TURNOVER PROBLEM PROPERTIES	4
FIBER INTERNET	2



"Host neighborhood events. Allow people to meet and form groups based on interests such as a mom's group, walking group, trivia club. There are so many young families in the neighborhood and it's hard to make connections. Having regular events at local places like the NE coffee shop or Fair State brewing would be a good way to bridge those connections."



"A diverse group of people who feel safe. A neighborhood where families feel safe. One that has fun community gatherings. One where there is open communication between residents and local elected officials."

Program use

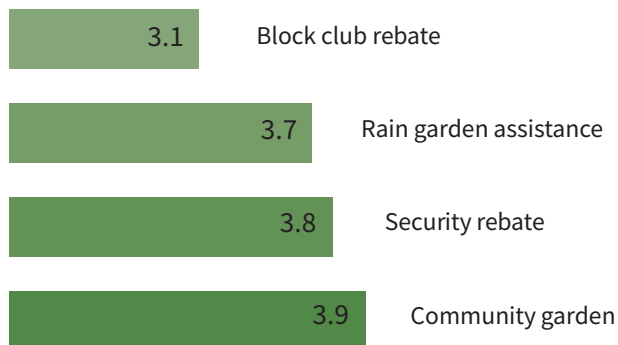
Survey respondents were asked to rate a range of housing programs based on their level of importance. The results were strongest for programs that offer loans for emergency home repairs, rent or mortgage payments.

Specific questions were asked about several programs, including the block club and home security rebates, rain garden assistance and the community garden. With the exception of the community garden, large percentages of respondents did not know about these programs. Only 5% of respondents had used the block club rebate program and 59% of respondents did not know about the program. 10% had used the rain garden program, with 53% not knowing about the program. 11% had used the community garden, with 28% not knowing about the program. 13% had used the security rebates, with 54% not knowing about the program.

When asked how important it was to maintain these programs, the most support was offered for the community garden, followed closely by the security rebates and rain garden assistance. The block club rebates were perceived as less important than these other programs.

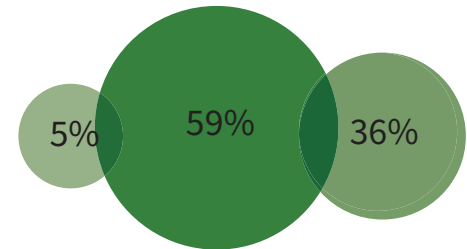
AVERAGE IMPORTANCE OF CURRENT PROGRAMS (n=221)

Rated on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important.



BLOCK CLUB REBATE

Responses averaged 3.1 on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important. The average rating was slightly higher for residents who've lived in the community 6-10 years.



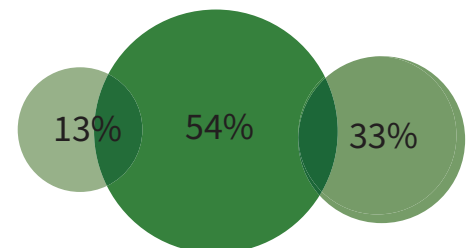
I have hosted a block club event and used the program

Not aware of the block club program

Aware, but haven't needed to use it

SECURITY REBATE

Responses averaged 3.8 on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important. The average rating was slightly higher for residents who've lived in the community 6-10 years.



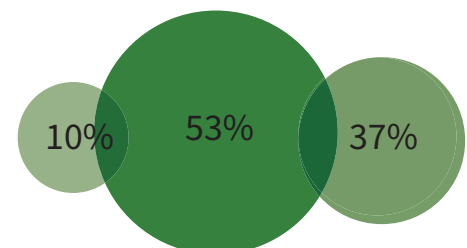
I have used the security rebate program

Not aware of the security rebate program

Aware, but haven't needed to use it

RAIN GARDEN PROGRAM

Responses averaged 3.7 on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important. The average rating was highest among newer residents.



I have used the rain garden program

Not aware of the rain garden program

Aware, but haven't needed to use it

Communication

Residents reported the highest degree of satisfaction and engagement with the WPCC newsletter, compared with the monthly meetings and digital communication options.

NEWSLETTER

Overall, respondents enjoyed reading the newsletter and found the information valuable. Key recommendations for enhancement included improving the clarity and brevity of content to allow for larger font and the inclusion of images. Respondents also sought a greater diversity of information covered, as well as content submitted by neighborhood residents. A large portion of readers shared a desire to receive the newsletter as an e-mail, or accessible on the WPCC website along with archived past issues.



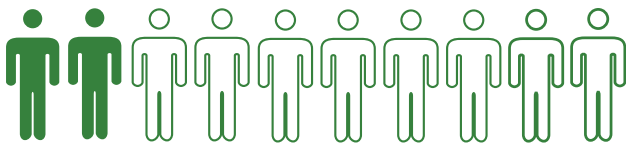
90% Sometimes or always read the newsletter

MEETINGS

A minority of respondents reported having attended or desired to attend a WPCC meeting. The former were generally pleased with the content covered and opportunities to engage, but recommended more focused coverage on a specific topic each meeting rather than a shallow overview of multiple issues. The latter primarily cited the lack of clear or early communication about meetings, conflicting work or family schedules, and mobility/accessibility concerns as constraints to attending. Notably, many respondents expressed an interest in digital options to engage, either through live streaming services or online recordings.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION: FACEBOOK AND WEBSITE

Neither of the WPCC digital communication options, the Facebook page and website, received high levels of engagement. In both cases, respondents stated low awareness of, or difficulty finding, the pages. Recommendations for improvement included ensuring information was up to date, including images and event information, and providing clear links to key resources such as rebate programs or the newsletter. Overall, respondents expressed a greater interest in engaging with the website rather than Facebook. Concerns about lack of privacy and corporate ethics prevented many respondents from engaging with Facebook in any capacity.



21% Regularly or occasionally engage with the WPCC Facebook page



9% Engage with the website and have successfully found what they're looking for

Response from board

WAITE PARK COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT BOARD RESPONSE

The Waite Park Community Council (WPCC) is grateful for the information and insight about our neighborhood that this process has provided. The board conducted this assessment project to inform our decisions going forward, helping us direct resources and energy into the issues and programs that mean most to our fellow neighbors.

Communications:

There is a lot to learn from this report. For one, we can see that many of our existing programs are of interest to our neighbors, such as the rain garden and community garden programs. However, it is also very clear that many neighbors don't know about these resources or how to access them. Given that, one of our key takeaways from this process is that the board needs to focus on communicating our existing activities. It's clear that our neighbors read and value the print newsletter -- and we'll also do a better job of getting the word out when we have more active email and social media channels. This will be a focus area for the board going forward.

Block-by-Block Gatherings:

This report also makes clear that many of us in Waite Park value gathering with our neighbors. The types of gatherings we seek include very local ones on our blocks and gatherings for adults. This kind of connectivity depends on all of us taking small steps right where we live to reach out and be neighborly. WPCC will decide whether or not to continue to support this with block party mini-grants, which will be more popular if food costs are allowed, as recommended in the Neighborhoods 2020 Framework.

Get Involved:

We are an all-volunteer organization made up of neighbors like you. The best way for the WPCC to thrive and live out these recommendations is for more neighbors to get involved, lending skills, interests, and networks.

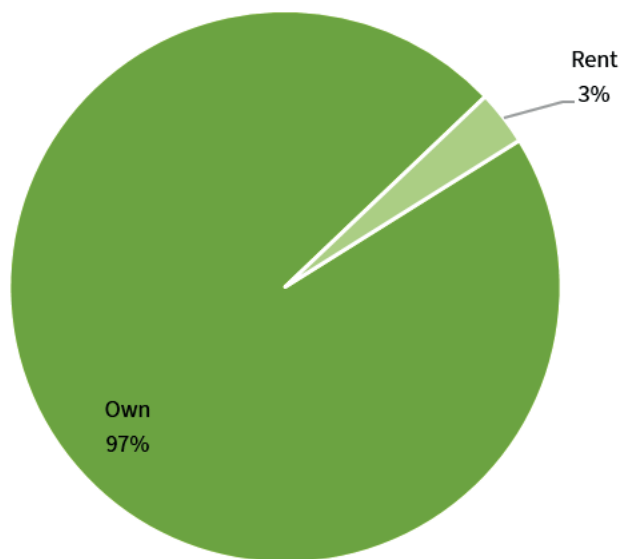
Please join us for the WPCC annual meeting on **Wednesday, February 5, from 6 - 8 pm** at the Waite Park Recreation Center. Social hour with food from 6 -7 pm. Meeting at 7 pm. Childcare provided. We will discuss this report and elect new members to the board. It's a great way to get more involved. With questions, or if you can't attend but to follow up, please contact WPCC at waiteparkcc@gmail.com if you'd like to get involved.

Learn more at <https://www.waiteparkmpls.org/>

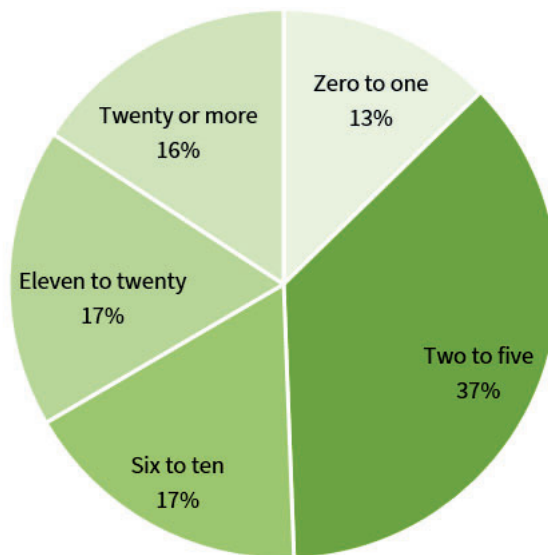
Demographics

SURVEY RESPONDENTS ONLY (N=221)

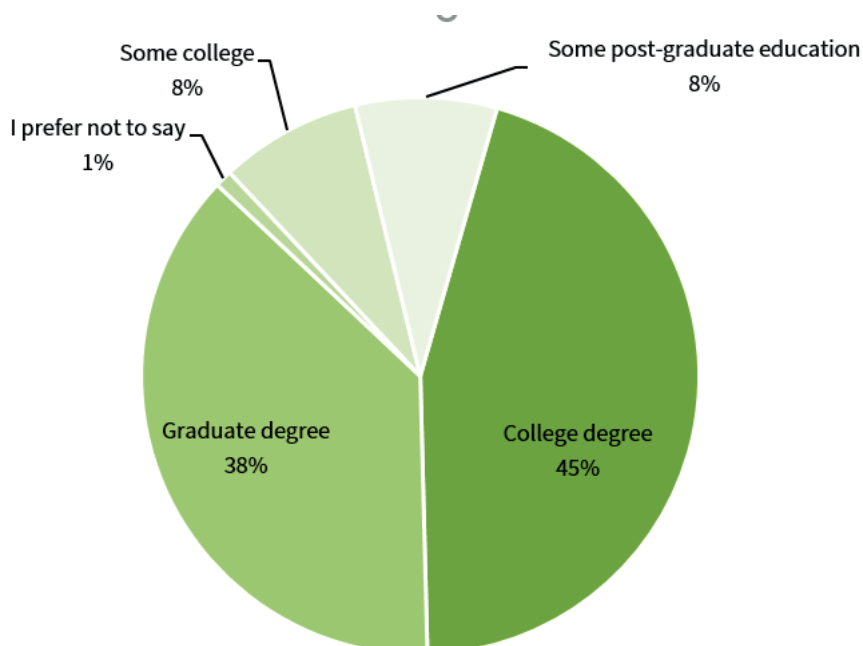
HOME TYPE



YEARS IN NEIGHBORHOOD



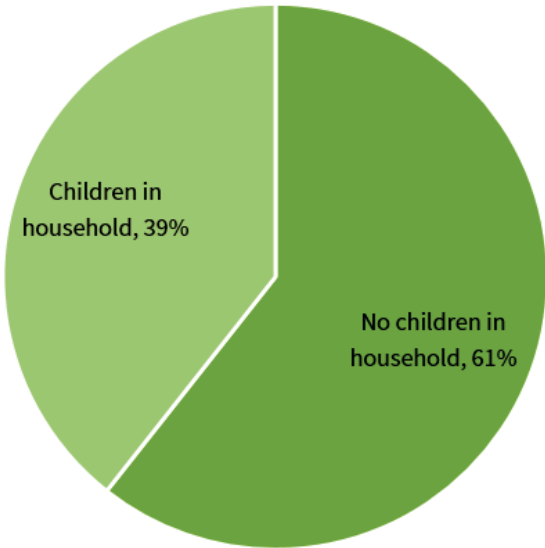
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED



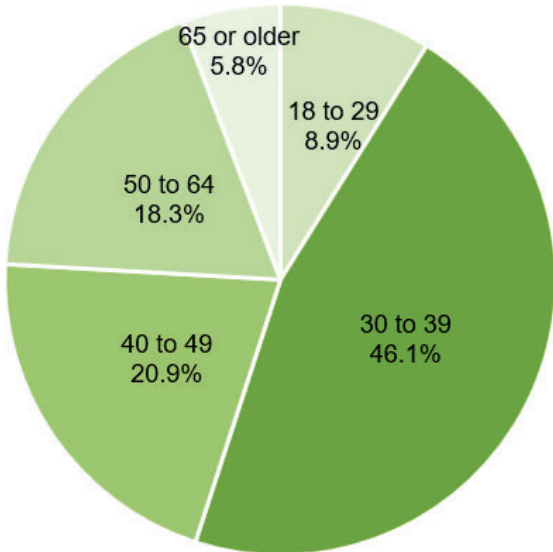
Demographics

SURVEY RESPONDENTS ONLY (N=221)

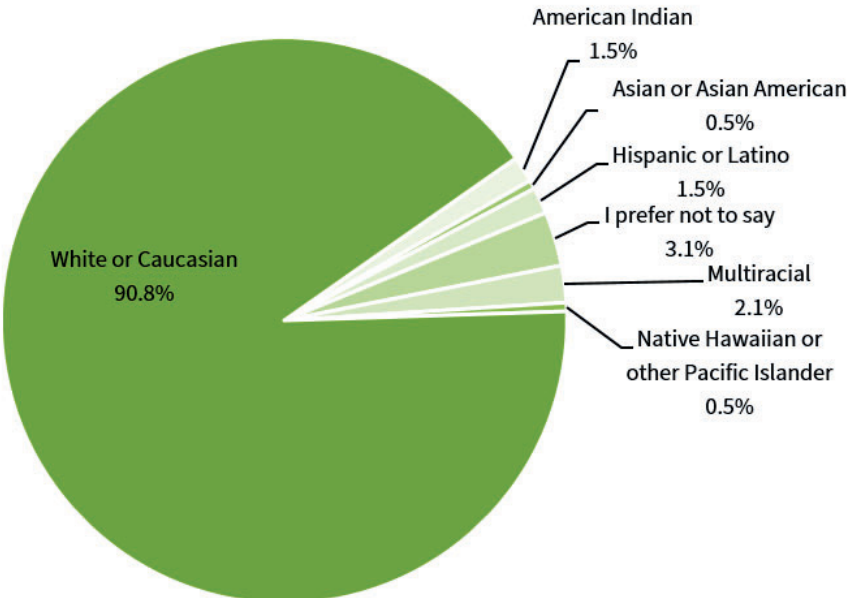
HOUSEHOLD CONFIGURATION



RESPONDENT AGE



ETHNICITY



Appendix

DATA TABLES

AMMENITIES OF AN IDEAL NEIGHBORHOOD, BY YEARS LIVING IN NEIGHBORHOOD

	Zero to One (n=28)	Two to five (n=81)	Six to ten (n=38)	Eleven to twenty (n=39)	Twenty of more (n=35)	All responses (n=221)
Access to park space	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.6
Access to high quality community schools	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.2
Relationships between neighbors on my block	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.2
Access to transit	4.4	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.1
Recreational opportunities for families with young children	3.7	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.1	3.9
Opportunities to get involved in neighborhood activities and projects	3.8	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.5
Recreational opportunities for seniors***	2.6	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.8	3.4

Averages based on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important.

***Differences in averages among length of residence groups were statistically significant ($p < .001$)

WISHES FOR WPCC, BY YEARS LIVING IN NEIGHBORHOOD

	Zero to One (n=28)	Two to five (n=81)	Six to ten (n=38)	Eleven to twenty (n=39)	Twenty of more (n=35)	All responses (n=221)
Home sustainability and reduced environmental impact	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.2
Home repair and home improvement	4.1	4.2	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.1
Help accessing public programs*	4.1	4.3	3.7	4.0	4.1	4.1
Opportunities for neighbors to meet and build relationships	3.9	4.1	4.0	3.8	3.7	3.9
Learning about gardening and landscaping	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.9
Learning about political issues impacting our city**	4.3	4.1	3.4	3.6	3.9	3.9
Learning about city policies and programs that impact our community	3.8	4.0	3.7	3.8	4.1	3.9
Planning engaging events for families	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.7
Providing financial support and training for hosting block club events	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4
Programs to provide recreational events for seniors*	2.9	3.3	3.3	3.6	3.8	3.4

Averages based on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important.

*Differences in averages among length of residence groups were statistically significant ($p < .05$)

**Differences in averages among length of residence groups were statistically significant ($p < .01$)

USE OF HOUSING FUNDS, BY YEARS LIVING IN NEIGHBORHOOD

	Zero to One (n=28)	Two to five (n=81)	Six to ten (n=38)	Eleven to twenty (n=39)	Twenty of more (n=35)	All responses (n=221)
Low- or no-interest loans for emergency home repairs	3.8	4.2	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.1
Low- or no-interest emergency loans for rent or mortgage payments to families in crisis	3.6	4.2	3.7	4.0	3.6	3.9
Low-interest home improvement loans to residents of the neighborhood	3.8	4.0	3.6	4.1	4.0	3.9
Increasing affordability for low-income families throughout the city	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.8
Increasing affordability for low-income families in our neighborhood*	3.4	3.9	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.6
Down payment assistance for home purchases in our neighborhood	3.5	3.4	2.9	3.2	3.1	3.3

Averages based on a scale of 1=not at all important to 5=very important.

*Differences in averages among length of residence groups were statistically significant (p<.05)

MENTION OF SAFETY CONCERNS, BY YEARS LIVING IN NEIGHBORHOOD

	Zero to One (n=41)	Two to five (n=120)	Six to ten (n=57)	Eleven to twenty (n=68)	Twenty of more (n=85)
Mentioned concern about safety (count)	2	13	12	15	16
Mentioned concern about safety (percent)	5%	11%	21%	22%	19%