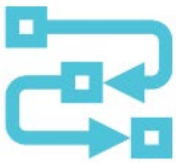


Climate & Energy Plan Survey 1 Engagement Report

Resilient Watertown is the Town of Watertown’s Climate Action and Energy plan. This planning process, currently ongoing, includes activities to engage Watertown community members. The goals of Resilient Watertown community engagement are:



Gather input through an equitable process



Build capacity of community members to understand climate issues



Spark ongoing climate conversations

Committed to an equitable engagement process, Watertown identified target populations within the community with which to conduct additional outreach. For Survey 1 that specifically included the Spanish speaking population.

Conducting the community engagement for this process during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the outreach for this survey, however efforts were adjusted, and additional virtual platforms were utilized to spread the word, such as the Town’s Soofa Signs, social media platforms, and outreach partners. In-person outreach was conducted by Laurel Schwab at community events as safety precautions permitted.

SURVEY 1 : PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS

In Survey One, the public was asked to complete an online survey regarding their priorities and concerns around climate hazards and related actions, as well as resilience topics. To ensure equitable engagement, this survey was provided in multiple formats, including one accessible to those with visual impairments and a version in Spanish.



Key findings from this survey included that participants were most interested in Natural Resources and Transportation & Mobility, although interest and comments on all areas were broad and varied.

How will this feedback be used?

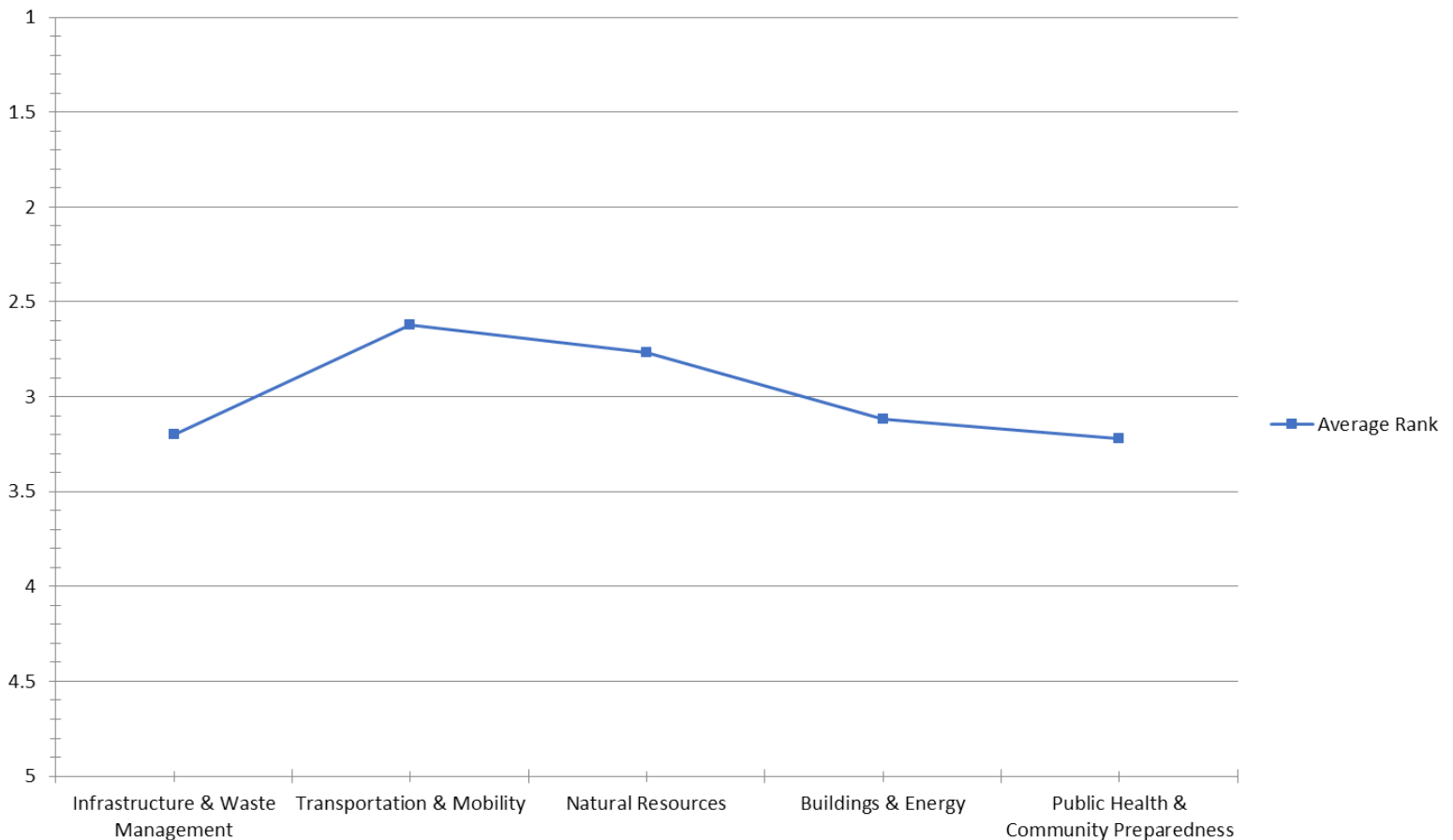
Natural Resources and Transportation & Mobility may be considered as high priorities for community members and the Town can draw on community interest to enact climate action.

More detail on participant responses to the survey on priorities and concerns are provided below.

SURVEY RESULTS

This survey was open for seven weeks—from June 7 to July 22, 2021, and had 365 participants. Below are the top-rated concerns from the Watertown community. More detailed results are on the following pages.

All Rankings Line Chart



★ Top 2 Concerns

1. Transportation & Mobility
2. Natural Resources

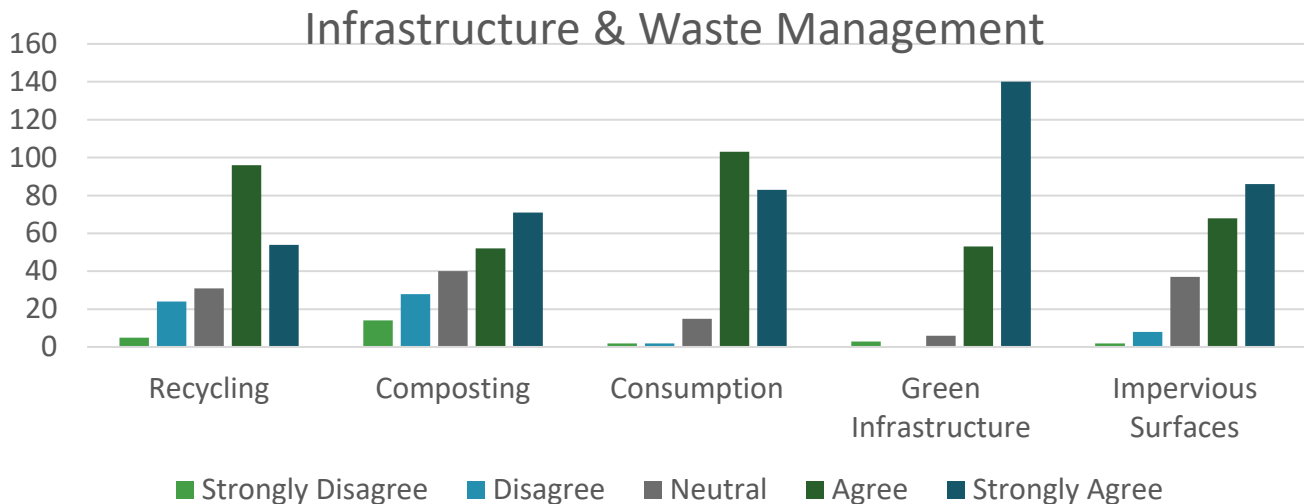
Note: Other plan elements ranked evenly, and no elements were clearly ranked lowest, showing distributed priority.

This survey was also offered via another platform (Survey Monkey) to increase accessibility to those with visual impairments (**90** participants). The priorities of those survey respondents were comparable to those of MetroQuest, notably that Natural resources was ranked higher than Transportation & Mobility.

SURVEY RESULTS: Infrastructure & Waste Management

Bar graphs show the distribution of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) for each statement (provided below) with the average score provided in parentheses.

The highest-ranked statement was **Green Infrastructure**, suggesting support for more investment. Recycling education and composting encouragement were relatively lower than other scores, representing areas of opportunity.



Green Infrastructure (4.62): “I support [greener stormwater practices](#), like installing porous pavers and rain gardens, that provide habitat, flood protection, and cleaner air and water.”

- **Consumption (4.28):** “I actively seek to reduce my consumption – for example by buying less, avoiding single use plastics like straws, or reusing or repairing things.”
- **Impervious Surfaces (4.13):** “I would be willing to reduce the amount of paved and concrete surface around my home or business to help reduce the [urban heat island effect](#).”
- **Recycling(3.81):** “I know what can and cannot be recycled in Watertown.”
- **Composting(3.67):** “I would be willing to pay, or already do pay, for curbside pickup of food waste for composting.”

Participant Comments

“I believe we should do as much of this as possible. It's also aesthetically pleasing and reduces surface heat temps in summer.”

“Would like to see education and possibly financial incentives for new and existing homeowners and landlords to transition their green spaces to be sustainable.”

“If the Town subsidized the cost of the removal of a driveway to be replaced with permeable pavers, I would be on board!”

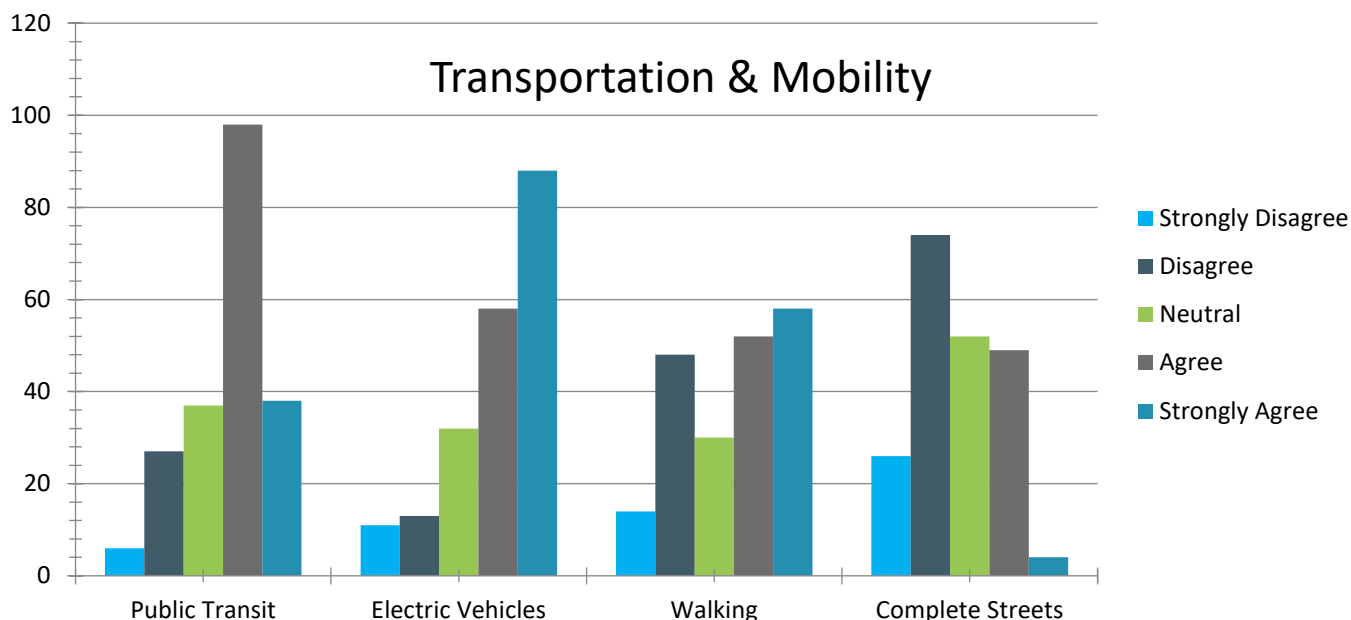
“Currently use Black Earth Compost, love them but would be even happier with a municipal service.”

The rankings from Survey Monkey, highest to lowest were:

1. Green Infrastructure
2. Consumption
3. Impervious Surfaces

SURVEY RESULTS: Transportation & Mobility

The highest-ranked statement was **Electric Vehicles** suggesting that more charging infrastructure will soon be needed. Responses also suggest not everyone feels safe walking and biking in Watertown and that transportation is not equally accessible to all residents.



- ★ **Electric Vehicles (3.99):** “I would consider buying or leasing an electric vehicle as my next car.”
- **Public Transit (3.66):** “Watertown’s public transit options are affordable and accessible to me.”
- **Walking (3.46):** “I walk to work or to do an errand at least three times a week.”
- **Complete Streets (2.66):** “Roads in Watertown are safe, pleasant, and [well-designed](#) for people who are walking, riding bikes, or using public transit.”

“I absolutely want my next car to be electric and would love to see greater infrastructure for them.”

“I chose to sacrifice other things such as amenities and some of my budget in order to ensure I live right on the bus route. Not everyone is able to do that. Those inequities need to be addressed. Peoples’ access is limited by their socioeconomics, disabilities, age, health etc. Any changes made need to keep these factors in mind.”

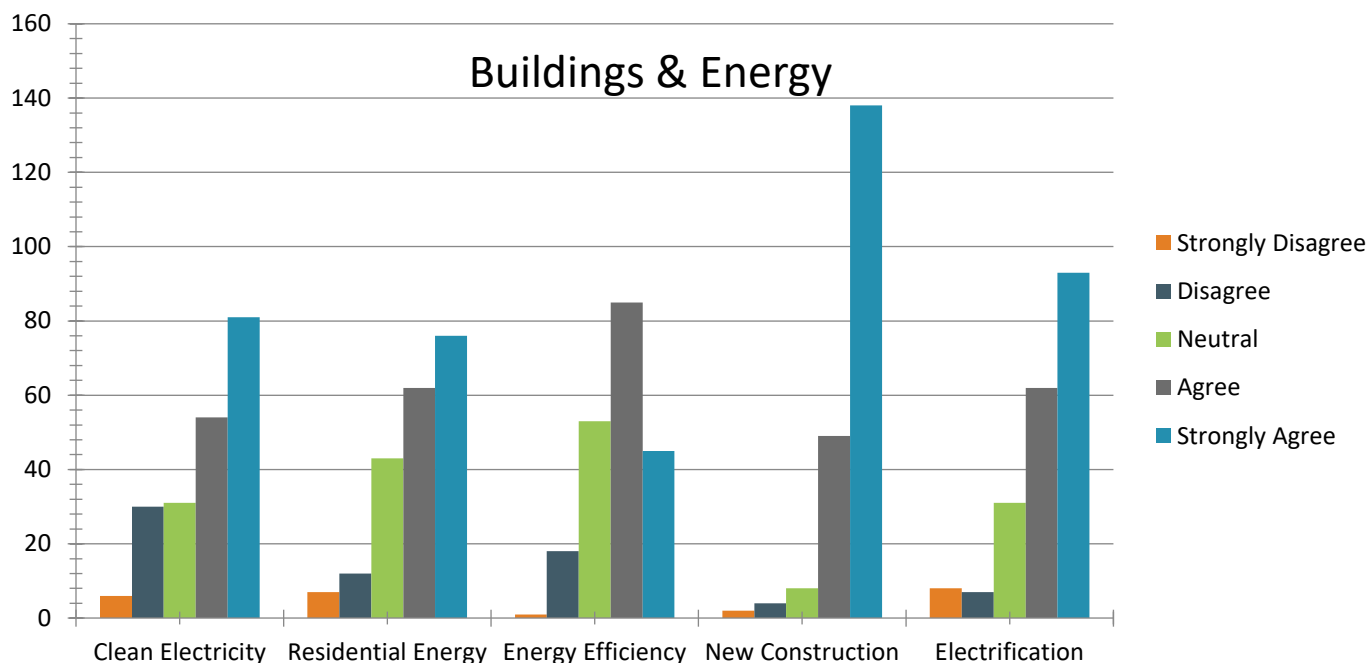
“Walkability is one of the reasons I live in Watertown.”

The rankings from Survey Monkey, highest to lowest were:

1. Electric Vehicles
2. Walking
3. Public Transit

SURVEY RESULTS: Buildings & Energy

The top ranked statement was **New Construction**. Responses show strong support for electrification and efficiency requirements, plus opportunities to increase uptake of *Watertown Electricity Choice* and residential energy efficiency programs.



- **Clean Electricity (3.86):** “I am aware I can choose 100% renewable energy through [Watertown Electricity Choice.](#)”
- **Energy Efficiency (3.77):** “I have taken all the steps I know to in my home to reduce my energy use.”
- **Residential Energy (3.94):** “I would like to update my home with energy-efficient systems (e.g., electric heat pumps), install solar panels, or make other upgrades that lead to deep energy savings and GHG emissions reductions.”
- ★ **New Construction (4.58):** “I support a policy requiring new construction in Watertown to be very energy efficient.”
- **Electrification (4.12):** “Watertown should require that all new buildings and major renovations use electric and/or renewable energy for heating and hot water.”

Participant Comments

“Town needs to leverage its desirability as a place to live and develop.”

“The sooner old Watertown and Massachusetts buildings are converted to electric and renewable heating the better. Oil, Gas and Propane are huge issues that need to be removed. Electric heat is far more convenient to use as well since it requires 1 utility bill and would likely not break down as often.”

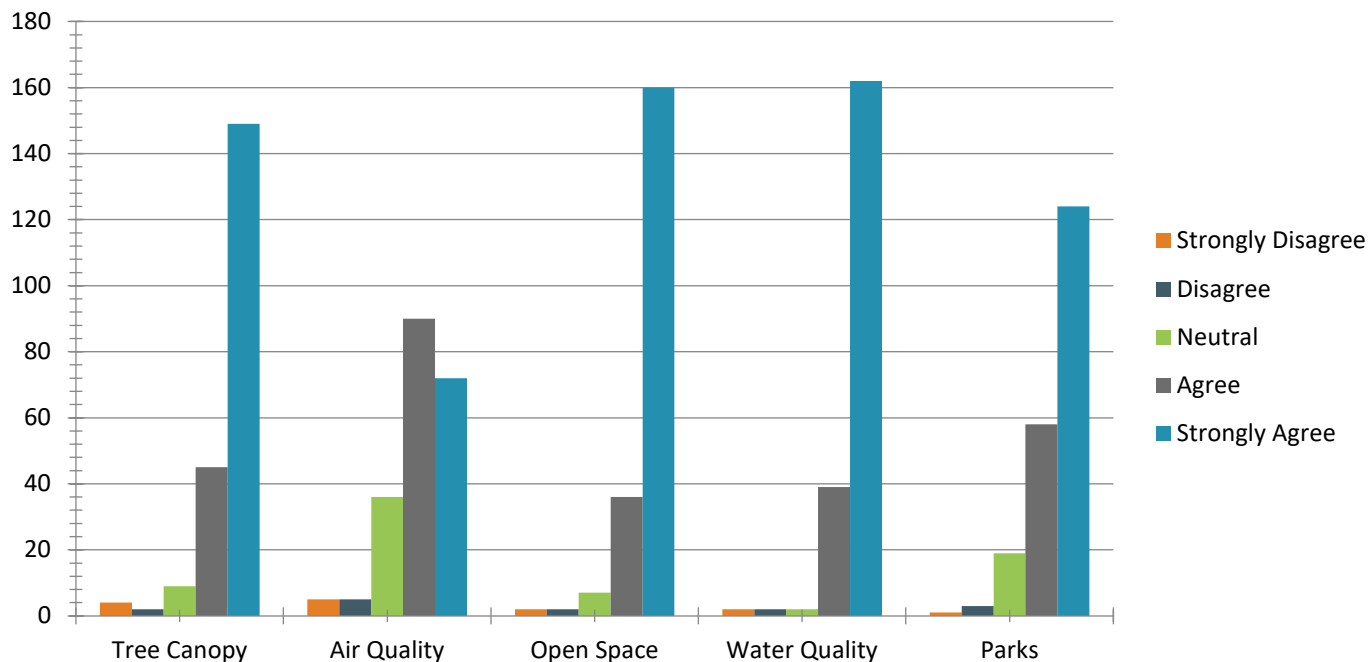
The rankings from Survey Monkey, highest to lowest were:

1. New Construction
2. Electrification
3. Clean Electricity

SURVEY RESULTS: Natural Resources

The top ranked result was **Water Quality**. Respondents want to see open and protected spaces located in lower-income neighborhoods and sensitive environmental areas.

Natural Resources



- **Air Quality (4.05):** “Air quality and public health motivates me to reduce my carbon footprint.”
- **Open Space (4.69):** “I support Watertown acquiring and preserving land for open space.”
- **Parks (4.47):** “I actively use Watertown’s parks and trails.”
- **Tree Canopy (4.59):** “We need to protect trees in Watertown and plant more.”
- ★ **Water Quality (4.72):** “I support the Town protecting our wetlands and buffer zones to improve quality of the water that flows into the Charles River.”

The rankings from SurveyMonkey, highest to lowest were:

1. Water Quality
2. Open Space
3. Tree Canopy
4. Tie between Parks and Air Quality

“I walk along the Charles every day”

“I think this is critical for Watertown to counteract all of the tremendous development. The Charles River, in particular, is our gem and we should do whatever we can to promote open space that encourages enjoyment of that area.”

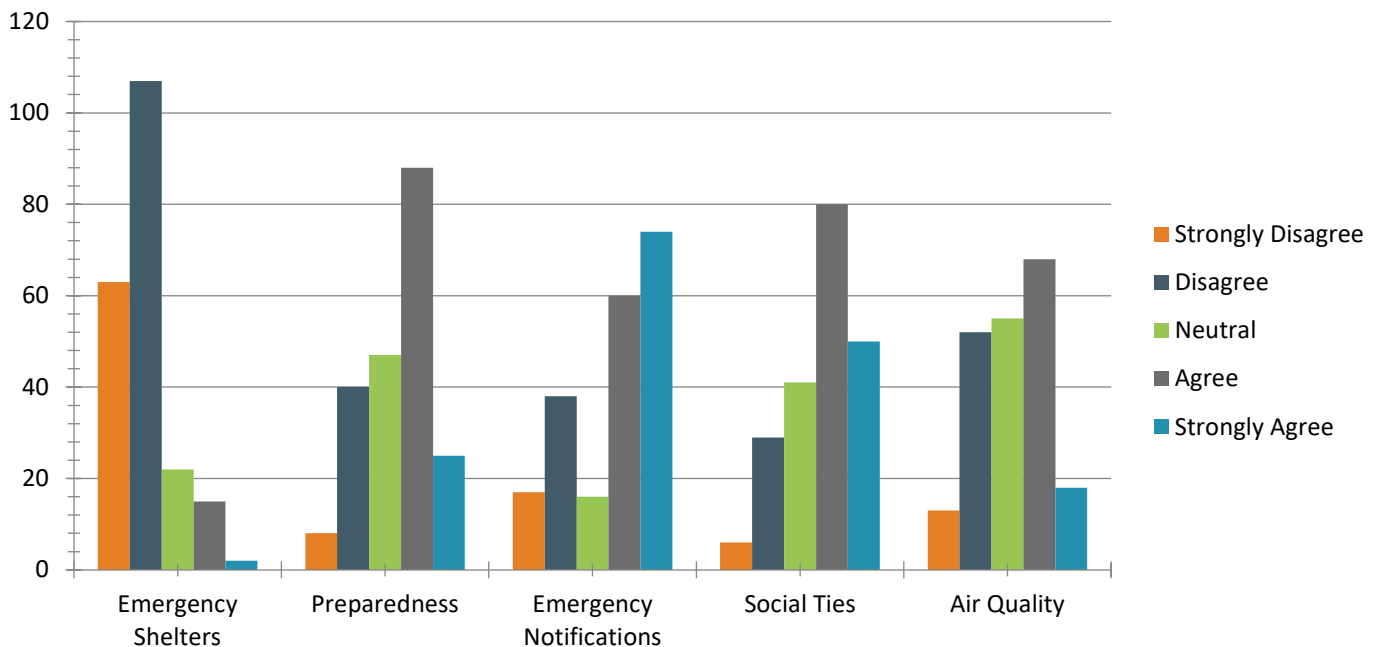
“We have little open space; more especially in lower rent areas are beneficial to the residents and town.”

“I have family members with asthma which causes me to worry about air quality and pollen counts.”

SURVEY RESULTS: Public Health & Community Preparedness

The top ranked result was **Social Ties**, suggesting residents feel connected to one another. Scores in general were much lower than other topic areas, suggesting significant opportunity to increase emergency preparedness .

Public Health & Community Preparedness



Social Ties (3.67): “I feel connected to my neighbors, and I could ask them if I needed help.”

- **Emergency Notifications (3.66):** “I am signed up for [WatertownALERT](#), the Town’s emergency notification system.”
- **Emergency Shelter (1.98):** “I know where I can go for shelter in case of an emergency.”
- **Preparedness (3.39):** “I have what I need to survive 72 hours without power in my home.”
- **Air Quality (3.13):** “I worry about a friend or family member’s health on hot days or during times of bad air quality.”

The rankings from SurveyMonkey, highest to lowest were:

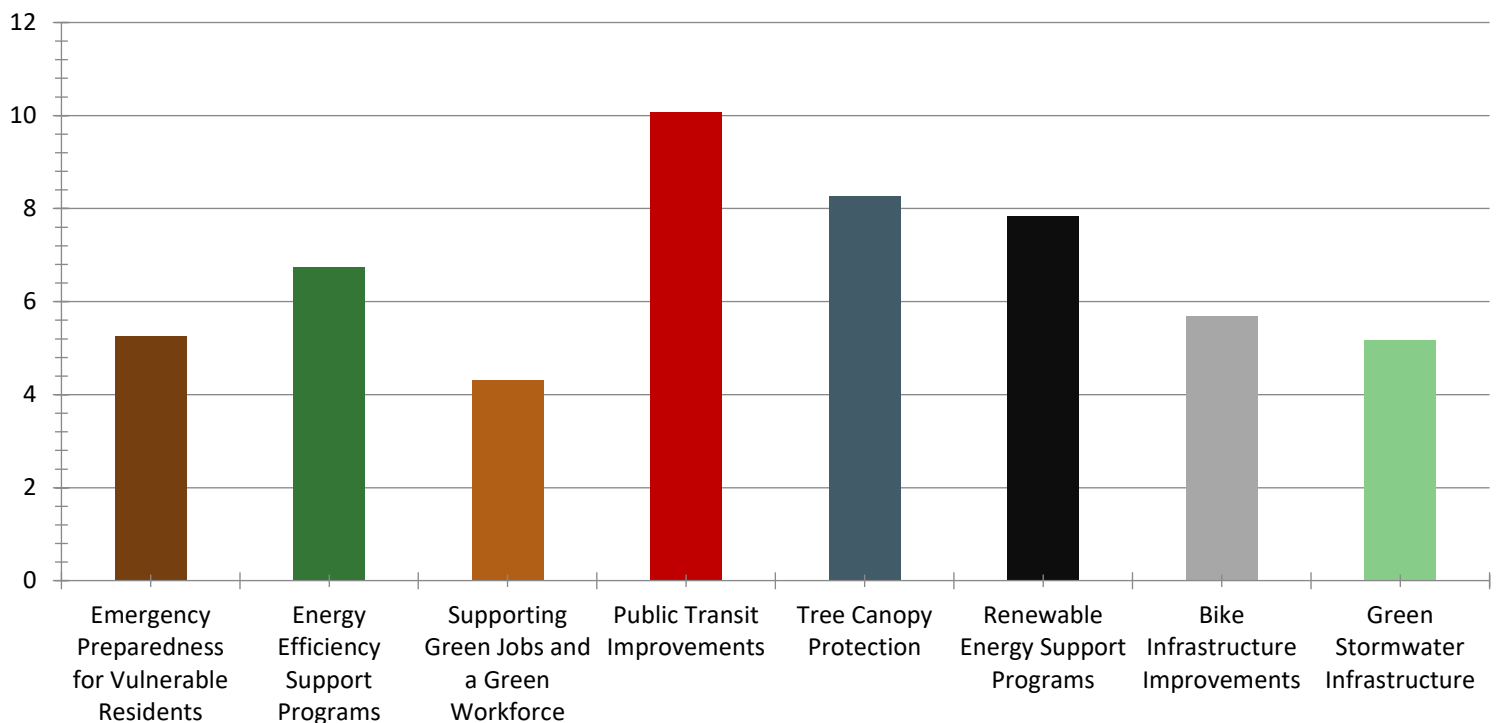
1. Emergency Notifications
2. Social Ties
3. Air Quality

SURVEY RESULTS: Spending Preference

This question allowed respondents to allocate a finite budget among multiple priorities.

Results indicate that community members support Town investment in **public transportation improvements**, followed closely by **tree canopy protection** and support for **energy efficiency** and **renewable energy programs**.

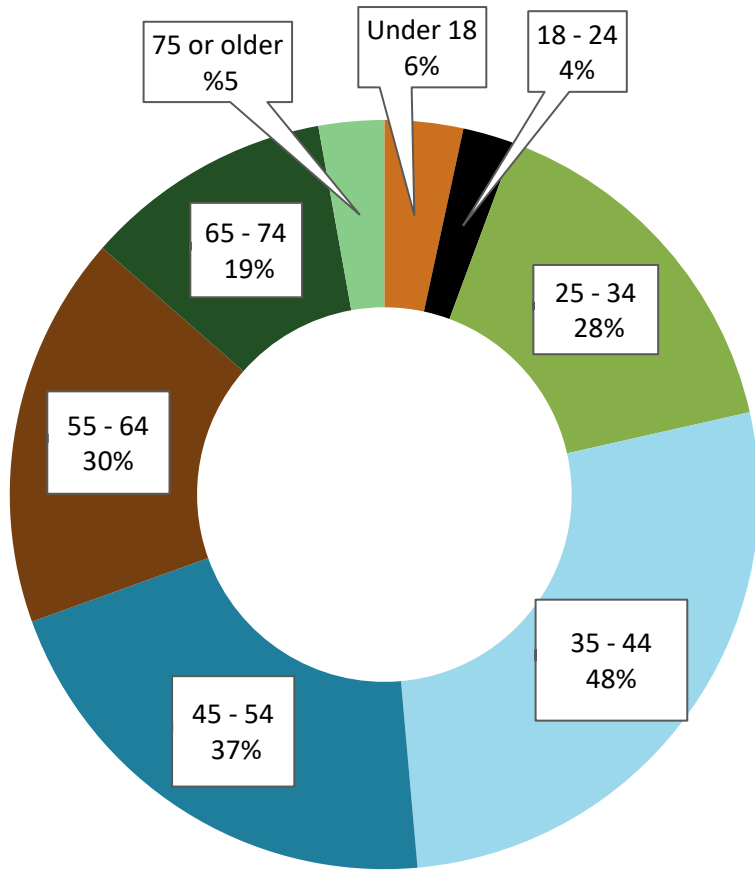
Average Spending Preference by Topic



The rankings from Survey Monkey, highest to lowest were:

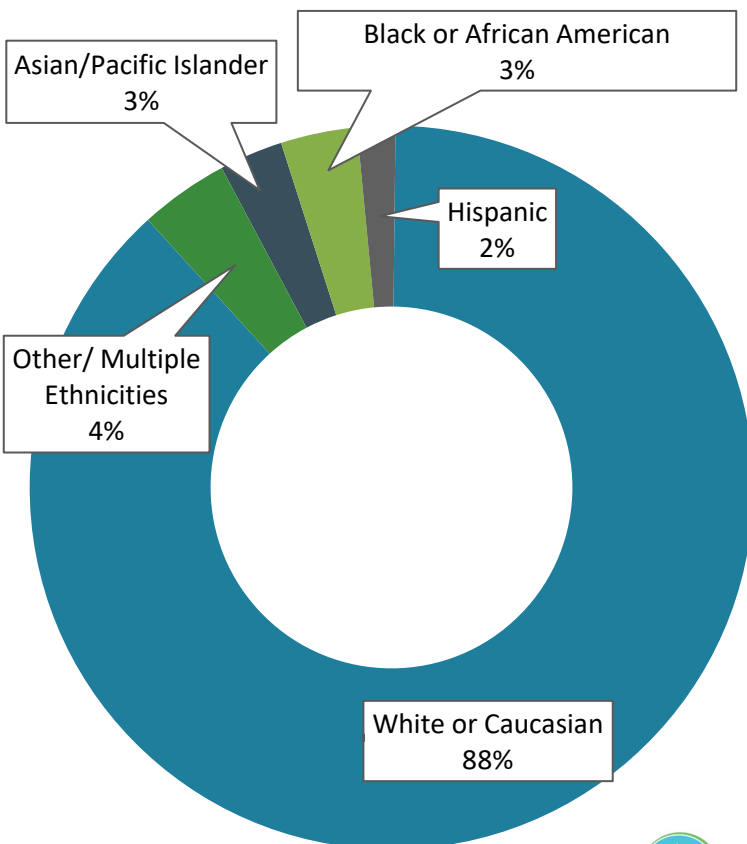
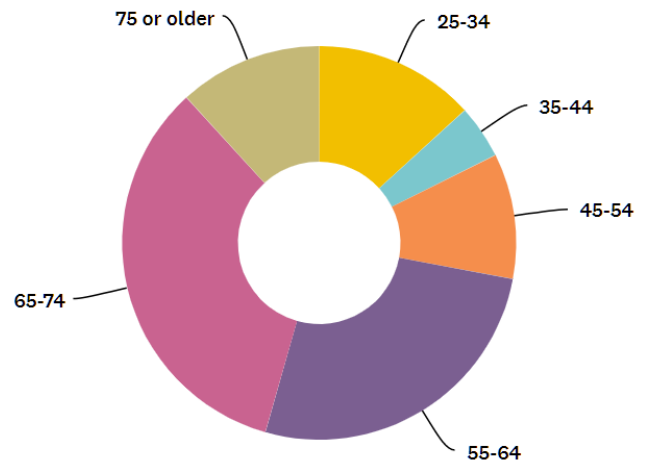
1. Energy Efficiency
2. Public Transportation
3. Tree Canopy Protection
4. Renewable Energy
5. Green Stormwater Infrastructure
6. Bike Infrastructure
7. Supporting Green Jobs
8. Emergency Preparedness

The Town can incorporate this feedback into action implementation by acknowledging what areas they may need to conduct more public outreach, education, and where to bolster public support.



Most Survey 1 respondents were between the ages of 35 and 64 (*left*).

Survey Monkey captured a higher percentage of community members 65 and older (*below*).



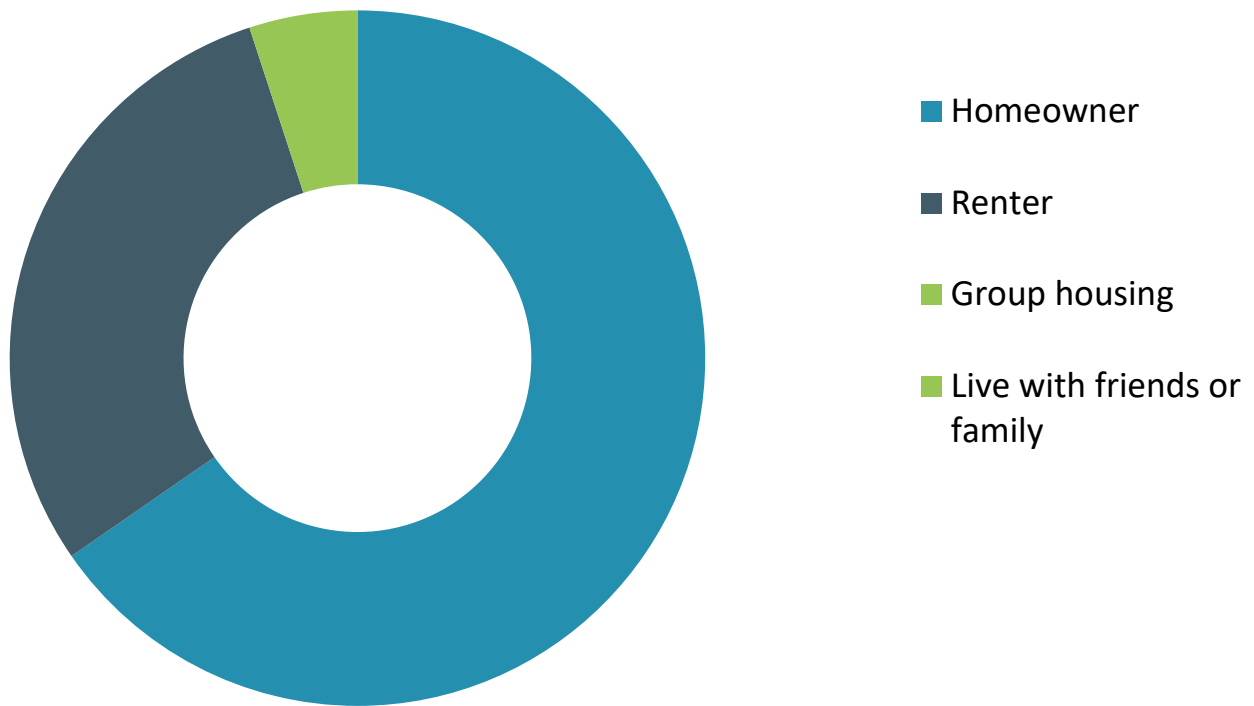
Watertown Community Profile

- White – 78%
- Asian – 8.1%
- Hispanic or Latino – 9.4%
- Black/African American- 2.0%
- Other – 1.0%
- Multiple Ethnicities- 1.4%

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Both versions of the survey **over-represented** white or Caucasian residents. In addition, there were **zero respondents** to the Spanish language survey. This represents an opportunity for **continued outreach to engage Spanish-speaking residents and residents of color.**

Housing Status



65% of Survey 1 respondents report owning their homes, which is higher than in Watertown at large. This survey did not accurately reflect rental status, however as a significant demographic in Watertown and one of the target audiences, renters are currently being engaged in a separate survey, as well as in a focus group.

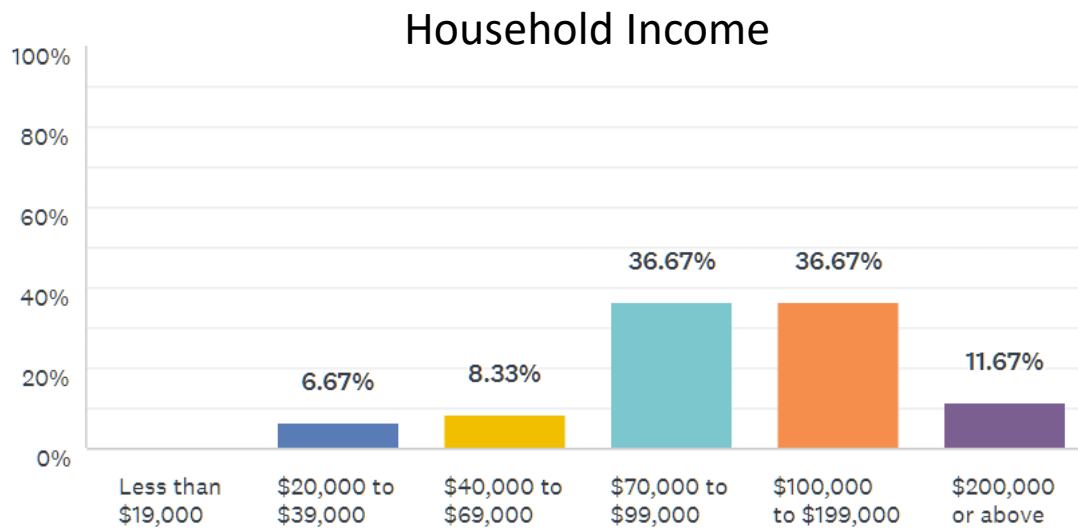
Watertown Housing Status

- Owner-Occupied Housing- 52.2%
- Renter-Occupied Housing- 47.8%

Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Many respondents reported that they have lived in Watertown more than 10 years (70% of Survey Monkey and 54% of MetroQuest respondents), suggesting that participants may be invested and knowledgeable about past and current Town developments.

SURVEY RESULTS: DEMOGRAPHICS



60 respondents noted their household income in the Survey Monkey version, with the majority of respondents reporting an income of \$70,000 - \$99,000 and \$100,000 - \$199,000 per year (each range with approximately 37% of the total of respondents).

While this is not unusual in comparison to the average household income for Watertown, (\$101,000 according to the Us Census, 2019) it demonstrates a need to reach lower-income residents in future engagement activities and consider their input for action implementation strategies.

How can your Town government best communicate with you?

Participants offered suggestions for how the Town can best communicate with them. While there was a range of answers, participants preferred to receive information via **emails, social media** and **Town website**.

This indicates a preference for virtual engagement. However, recognizing the limitations and equity considerations of virtual communication is essential, especially considering the demographic groups that were underrepresented among Survey 1 responses. Personal connections, working with outreach partners, and multilingual materials are still essential.