

Vision 4.0

Leading with Love: A Vision of Connection for St. Louis Park 4.0

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St. Louis Park
MINNESOTA

FORECAST

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Executive Summary

Emerging from a wide range of comprehensive and creative community engagement, St. Louis Park Vision 4.0 reveals a proud and caring community that loves their city. This vision was shaped by the voices of St. Louis Park through traditional, nontraditional, grassroots, and artist-driven citywide engagements that resulted in a combination of measurable quantitative data and open-ended qualitative data. Over the course of the project, this approach reached over 2,000 community members; more than double the amount of previous Vision process. Given the wide range of engagement methods, some themes and recommendations are outside of the city's purview. Each theme that emerged, however, influences and contributes to the community's identity and success.

Building on the positive impact of three previous visioning processes, Vision 4.0 serves as a reflection of the community's aspirations and values. The Vision 4.0 process centered community voices to understand the city's evolving identity, assess its progress, and identify aspirations for the decade ahead. Through more than 2,000 touchpoints - including artist-led mobile pop-ups, community conversations, surveys, and open houses - the Vision 4.0 process demonstrated a community that is deeply proud, deeply invested, and deeply committed to shaping its future together.

Residents overwhelmingly described St. Louis Park as welcoming, diverse, connected, and community-minded. They expressed pride in the city's parks, trails, natural resources, and its strong neighborhood identity. At the same time, they named challenges and opportunities to improve. People want safe streets and public spaces, a wide range of housing choices, thriving business districts, and "third places" and events for neighbors to gather. Young families voiced their desire for high performing schools and housing affordability; renters and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) residents emphasized representation, trust, and equitable access; and residents of all backgrounds stressed the importance of planning proactively for the next generation.

Together, these insights shaped a set of forward-looking recommendations that reflect the community's shared values and meet the moment. Vision 4.0 calls for:

A holistic and trust-based approach to safety, expanding prevention and non-police responses and strengthening relationships across public safety systems.

A commitment to people-first infrastructure, with connected sidewalks, protected bikeways, safe streets, and reliable “invisible” systems that support daily life.

Bold leadership in sustainability, expanding green infrastructure, accelerating climate action, and ensuring both environmental and financial resilience.

Investment in social infrastructure and belonging, with vibrant public spaces, robust arts and cultural opportunities, and systems that embed equity and representation throughout city operations.

A diverse and attainable housing ecosystem, including more “missing middle” options, strengthened renter stability, and equitable paths to homeownership.

Across every method of engagement, one message was clear: St. Louis Park cares deeply about maintaining its welcoming spirit while preparing for a changing future. Residents want proactive leadership that brings people together, builds trust, respects neighborhood character, and turns shared aspirations into measurable progress. Vision 4.0 affirms that the city's path forward will require collaboration across residents, staff, and elected officials—and that the community is ready to engage in that work.

By following this roadmap, St. Louis Park can honor its history, strengthen what makes it unique, and create new opportunities that ensure the city remains a place where everyone can thrive—today and for generations to come.

Introduction

Project Background

For more than 30 years, the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, has developed a unifying community vision by inviting residents to define a shared future direction. This visioning process emphasizes collaborative problem-solving and genuine community involvement with city staff, elected officials, and community leaders. Now in its fourth iteration—Vision 4.0—this initiative will inform strategic priorities, steer planning efforts, and shape decisions for the next decade.

Although every visioning project is distinct and reflects the specific context and needs of its community at that time, they are considered holistically, building on the successes and lessons learned from previous efforts.

Previous visions have led to the creation of landmark programs and developments, including:

Mobility initiatives:

Connect the Park expanded the pedestrian and bicycle facilities, complete streets and living streets policies that enhance our networks.

Minnehaha Creek re-wilding:

This project improved water quality, habitat and access to this natural resource and community amenity.

Wolfe Park Redesign:

The transformation of a key public space into a vibrant community hub.

Excelsior & Grand:

A pioneering mixed-use development that brought new life and housing options to the area and enhanced the community's image.

Environmental initiatives:

MN GreenStep Cities, SolSmart, climate action plan, sustainability division staff and programming, green building policy, and more that have all shaped city operations, development standards, and tools for businesses and residents.

Housing initiatives:

Move-up in the park program, down payment assistance for first-time and first generation homebuyers, rental assistance programs including emergency assistance and the Kids in the Park program, and the inclusionary housing policy.

Other initiatives:

Adoption of community-oriented policing model, neighborhood-based community organizing, diversity, equity and inclusion policy.

Children First:

A framework that places the needs of young people at the center of community planning.

This recent chapter in St. Louis Park's history builds on that legacy, starting with a committed group of residents who united to establish the groundwork for this vital effort.

Past Visions: A baseline for community connection



This report marks the 30-year evolution of St. Louis Park’s three iterations of the city’s visioning priorities from 1995 to 2017. Within this progression, St. Louis Park has consistently and proactively evolved, beginning with self-reflection to understand its needs, then actively creating physical assets – ‘hardware’ – (Vision 1.0), to fostering community connections – ‘social nodes’ (Vision 2.0), and most recently identifying and defining ways to intentionally engage with each other – the ‘software’ – with a focus to explore racial and elder equity (Vision 3.0).

Discussion on Historical Social Disconnection and Systemic Change

In 2017, Vision 3.0 highlighted a notable gap in resident experiences: 42% of people of color who attended neighborhood meetings were more likely to describe their feelings about their community with negative words like “disconnected, sad, lonely, isolated, cold, frustrated, secluded, nervous, depressed, neglected, or unsupported.” In contrast, 79% of white respondents used positive terms such as “safe, happy, proud, and good.”

This disparity showed that, despite Vision 1.0’s aim of recognizing diversity (1995) and Vision 2.0’s aim of establishing an inclusive model (2007), St. Louis Park could make

more progress toward an inclusive community, which 68.42% of neighborhood meetings identified as a core value.

Vision 3.0's response advanced from raising awareness to promoting systemic and measurable action: grouped into two themes. One focused on systemic change, encouraging leadership in racial equity to foster an ecosystem where equity becomes a "way of life," including hiring a Racial Equity Coordinator and offering extensive training to community and city leaders. The other theme centered on "software"—residents' emotional and social bonds—highlighting that collaboration between this 'software' and the physical 'hardware' assets is vital for a sustainable city, reflecting the community's second most valued aspect, social connections.

Past Visions Flowing into the Current

This dedication to systemic equity and social ties forms the core mandate for any future visioning effort (Vision 4.0), particularly when viewed alongside ongoing demographic and economic shifts highlighted in recent data.

Affordability and the Evolving Middle Class

Vision 3.0 highlighted the Changing Middle Class as a significant, certain trend where the city was underprepared. This trend, characterized by rising costs for middle-class living outstripping wage increases, deepens wealth gaps and harms social outcomes. Currently, St. Louis Park reports a Median Household Income of \$100,250 and a Median Owner-Occupied Housing Value of \$371,600¹⁶. These high economic thresholds likely worsen the affordability issues identified in 2017, when many residents, especially seniors and low-income workers, expressed concerns about being "priced out" of the community.

Poverty and Demographics

St. Louis Park's poverty rate is low at 7.4%, with the largest group in poverty being 25–34 year old females, followed by 18–24 year old females. The city's diversity grows; in 2023, 77.6% of residents were White (Non-Hispanic), meaning over 22% are from other races or ethnicities. Vision 4.0 has the opportunity to ensure equitable access to housing and

opportunities for this diversity and address economic pressures on younger residents, especially women, as seen in poverty data.

Transit and mobility are critical equity issues

Vision 3.0 highlighted that inadequate transit, especially bus frequency and routes, disproportionately affects people of color who may be more often working non-traditional hours or multiple jobs. In 2023, 63% of residents still commuted alone by car, underscoring the continued importance of Future-Focused Transit and Mobility Solutions (Recommendation #2 in Vision 3.0) that address diverse work schedules.

Community Involvement Strategy

Placing Community at the Center and Throughout

Understanding the “why” behind community contexts, perspectives, and needs is as crucial as knowing the “what.” Thus, comprehensive and responsive community outreach and engagement are at the center of St. Louis Park’s Vision 4.0, which was launched in September 2024. Throughout the project, we offered a variety of arts-based opportunities for community members to provide input and share their aspirations and recommendations for St. Louis Park’s Future.

The Vision 4.0 Community Involvement Plan (CIP) identified the goals of the citywide engagement efforts and the ecosystem of stakeholders.

Goals

- Provide clear information to the community about the process
- Explore the community’s progress and evolving identity
- Identify the community’s aspirations and recommendations for its future
- Gather information from a diverse range of people, with a focus on underrepresented and emerging voices, youth, and renters

- Provide a variety of ways for members of the community to share their views
- Utilize cost-effective methods to engage with the community
- Employ diverse methods such as town hall meetings, focus groups, surveys, online platforms, pop-up events, fun activities, one-on-one interviews and dialogue, and targeted outreach to underrepresented groups.

Key Stakeholders

- St. Louis Park residents
- St. Louis Park city staff
- St. Louis Park elected officials
- Community Organizations
- Cultural and Arts Organizations
- Educational Institutions

Through the CIP, we laid the groundwork for deploying our mixed-methods engagement strategy, which combines quantitative data collection with informative human-centered qualitative methods. This approach effectively captures both the breadth and the nuanced details of community sentiment.

Ambassador Cohort

To reach a broad audience in St. Louis Park, the engagement began by forming an Ambassador Cohort to guide the development of engagement content. The Ambassador Cohort was a diverse group including St. Louis Park residents, city employees, and Councilmembers. About 30 members attended three interactive sessions—one in February 2025 and two in March 2025—where they took part in group activities and in-depth discussions. The insights gained from these sessions provided qualitative data that informed every Vision 4.0 arts-based activity for Mobile Engagement (e.g., pop-ups), Static Engagement, and Open Houses.

The Ambassadors developed the following:

Defining the identity of SLP:

In Session 1, participants explored the “personality” of SLP by identifying traits and values that the community embodies and promotes. A total of 96 traits and values were recognized, with the most frequently mentioned including caring, convenient, diverse, engaged, family-focused, friendly, fun, home, innovative, leader, progressive, safe, small town, supportive, open-mindedness, parks, welcoming, and wellness.

Topic Discovery and Question Development

In Session 2, participants generated and selected questions to engage community members during different activities in the larger engagement process.



The questions and their uses are as follows:

Community Survey and Facilitated Community Conversation Questions

- What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
- What keeps you in St. Louis Park?
- How can St. Louis Park support the next generation?

Mobile Pop-Up Engagement

- 2030 SLP in and out list - what's in, what's out?
- When people come to visit you, where do you take them in SLP?

- What three words should describe SLP in 2030?
- What is the major headline about SLP in 2030?

Poster and Lawn Sign Content

- How can SLP support the next generation?
- Facilitated Community Conversation refinement: In session 3, participants ran through the facilitated conversation activity that is part of the following engagement phase and offered ideas for refinement.



The local artist collective, Studio Thalo, participated in all three sessions to produce a graphic recording of the process. In the first two sessions, they took notes and created sketches. During the third session, they brought a canvas and painted a graphic summary of what they heard across all sessions on-site ('live'). The completed artwork now hangs in City Hall, and the digital image was utilized in various ways throughout the engagement phase.

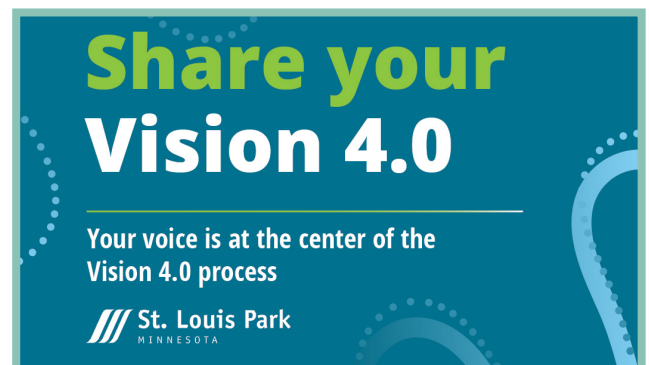
Community Conversations



As part of the Vision 4.0 engagement, we invited St. Louis Park residents to host and lead small-group discussions in their community. To foster a relaxed atmosphere, these gatherings were suggested for informal, familiar settings such as dinner parties, backyards, potlucks, or community rooms. We conducted three training sessions covering how to facilitate the conversations, the questions to ask, and methods for recording feedback. This qualitative approach enabled us to gain a detailed, nuanced understanding of residents' experiences, concerns, and goals, as expressed in their own words.

Static Engagement

Traditional online methods were used to raise awareness and gather feedback by creating a dedicated project webpage with a community survey. This webpage offered an overview of the project, updates, and recorded training for those interested in facilitating a Community Conversation without attending one of the three live sessions. The survey was prominently placed at the top of the page and available in English, Spanish, and Somali. The site also featured a translation tool supporting seven languages: English, Spanish, Somali, Amharic, Russian, Hmong, and Vietnamese.



To raise awareness in public spaces and through face-to-face outreach, we created posters, lawn signs, and business cards featuring a QR code and URL to the project webpage. The posters and lawn signs posed a question chosen by the Ambassador Cohort: “How can we support the next generation?” These materials were handed out at each in-person event and were also available at City Hall’s front desk during office hours. Additionally, the posters and lawn signs were translated into Spanish and Somali. City staff mainly distributed the business cards as they engaged with community members.

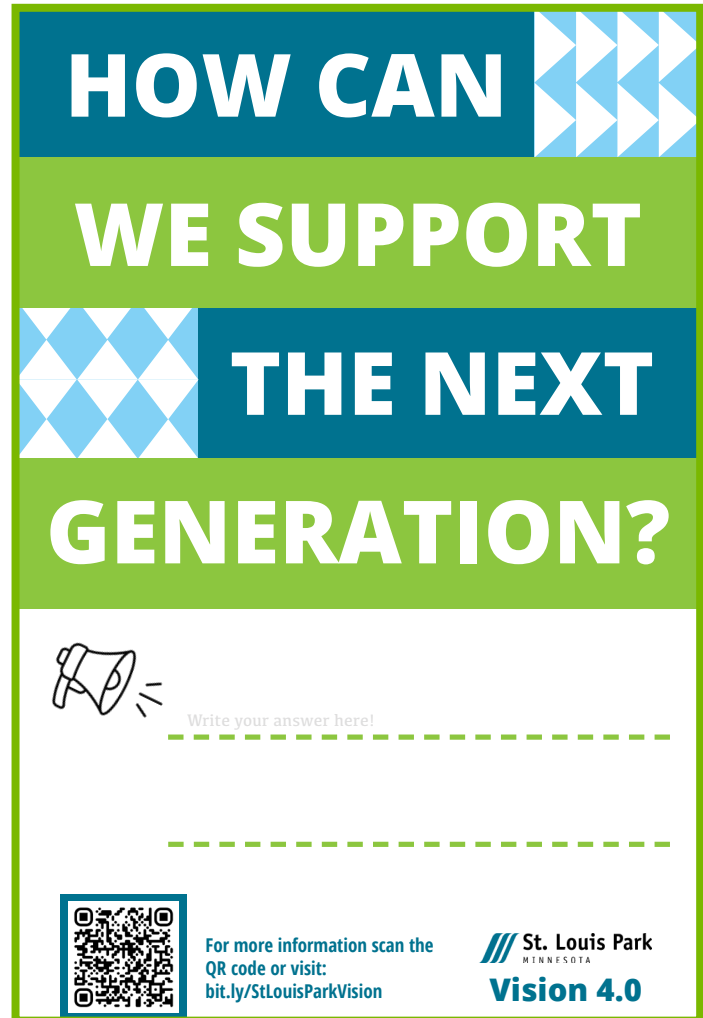
Mobile Engagement

To reach a wide range of community members, we developed arts-based pop-ups to engage people at festivals, celebrations, and other social events. Four of the pop-ups were led and staffed by local artists.

Mobile pop-ups

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| ▶ Fire Station Open House | 6/10/2025 |
| ▶ Parktacular | 6/14/2025 |
| ▶ Parktacular - Elections | 6/14/2025 |
| ▶ All-Female Swim at the Aquatic Park | 6/22/2025 |
| ▶ Summer Concert Series | 6/25/2025 |
| ▶ Fireworks Celebration | 7/3/2025 |

featuring Pedal to the Metal: Traveling Foundry



- ▶ Concert in the Park 7/9/2025
- ▶ Summer Concert Series 7/16/2025
- ▶ Clothing Swap 7/22/2025
- ▶ Skateapalooza 7/30/2025
featuring Streetcorner Letter Press
- ▶ Vision 4.0 Table at Summer Concert Series 7/30/2025
- ▶ Concert in the park 8/6/2025
- ▶ Summer Reading Fest - Ice Cream Social 8/10/2025
- ▶ Tabling Event at Apartment Complex 8/19/2025
- ▶ Tabling at Apartment Complex 8/20/2025
- ▶ Basketball in the Park 8/28/2025
featuring Streetcorner Letter Press
- ▶ High School Back to School Event 8/28/2025
- ▶ Movies in the Park 8/28/2025
- ▶ Renter outreach 8/28/2025
- ▶ Movies in the Park 9/5/2025
featuring Peter Haakon Thompson: Mobile Sign Shop
- ▶ SLP Art Fair 9/6/2025



Collaborating with artists to develop the pop-up activities offered creative and interactive opportunities for community members to express their dreams and aspirations for St. Louis Park. Activities included creating a time capsule with ‘Pedal to the Metal: Traveling Foundry’ by Jess Bergman Night, onsite printing of commissioned St. Louis Park designs by Streetcorner Letterpress, and wooden sign carving by Peter Haakon Thompson’s Mobile Sign Shop.

City staff participated in many community events and used Vision 4.0 materials and activities to boost project engagement. This “pop-up” approach allowed us to gather spontaneous, high-level feedback while lowering barriers to participation by meeting community members where they are.

Open Houses

Once the mobile engagement activities began, we noticed that youth participation was low. To gather input from as many St. Louis Park residents as possible, we tailored the open houses to attract a younger audience. The open houses included presentations and display boards that showcased an overview of the engagement activities, demographics, and emerging themes. The in-person open houses were held on a weekend afternoon at Aquila Park and during St. Louis Park High School’s Back-to-School night.

Engagement Data

To shape the future of St. Louis Park, the Vision 4.0 project employed a community engagement strategy that involved reaching residents through mobile pop-ups, community conversations, and a survey. In limited instances, respondents may have participated in more than one engagement method – for example, someone who participated in an arts-based engagement at a festival may have also taken the survey. However, when counting the total number of individuals who engaged in each engagement method, we have 2,336 interactions with Vision 4.0. To account for the potential instances of double counting, we propose a total reach of approximately 2,000 individuals.

Data Collection

Our analysis draws from three distinct and complementary data collection methods:

Mobile Engagement

Teams engaged residents at a variety of 19 community events and locations, ranging from large citywide events such as Parktacular and the Fireworks Celebration to hyper-local tabling opportunities at apartment complexes. This dynamic approach brought the conversation directly to communities. This “pop-up” method enabled us to capture spontaneous, high-level feedback from 1,607 interactions with community members.

Community Conversations

After we provided open and accessible in-person and virtual trainings, community facilitators led small-group conversations with a total of 96 residents. This qualitative method provided a deep, nuanced understanding of residents’ experiences, concerns, and aspirations in their own words in comfortable and informal settings.

Community Survey

An online and paper survey was made available city-wide, yielding 633 responses. This allowed highly engaged residents to provide thoughtful, written feedback on the core visioning questions. The survey was available in English, Spanish, and Somali. St. Louis Park Communications staff widely distributed this survey via email newsletters and social media throughout the project. The online version of this survey was the only anonymous feedback channel.

Anchoring Questions

Community input centered on three primary questions:

1. What are your dreams for St. Louis Park? (Dreams & Aspirations)
2. What keeps you in St. Louis Park? (Retention & Resilience)
3. How can St. Louis Park support the Next Generation? (Sustainability & Future Proofing)

Analysis Method

We analyzed the data using descriptive statistical summaries to assess participation

patterns and demographic representation. For the open-ended responses about dreams, values, and future support, we identified recurring themes by examining the most frequently mentioned concepts. This thematic analysis helped surface the community's collective priorities while honoring individual perspectives.

This process involved:

- Reviewing comments and conversation points.
- Identifying recurring ideas, concerns, values, and tensions.
- Systematically grouping topics into the overarching themes.
- Synthesize the themes into descriptive pillars.

This human-centered analysis ensures that the findings accurately reflect the lived experiences and priorities of St. Louis Park residents.

Community Profile Data

A. St. Louis Park Demographics*

St. Louis Park, MN, is home to a population of 49,541 people as of 2023, residing in an area covering 10.6 square miles, with a density of 4,663.2 people per square mile. The demographic profile is predominantly White (Non-Hispanic), which constitutes 77.6% (38.5k people) of the population, making this group 15.4 times larger than any other race or ethnicity. The largest ethnic groups are Two Races Excluding Other & Three or More Races (Non-Hispanic), at 5.03% (2,490 people), and Asian (Non-Hispanic), at 4.55% (2,260 people). The median age is 36, which is slightly lower than the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington Metro Area (37.8). Furthermore, 96.5% of residents are U.S. citizens, with the foreign-born population accounting for 8% (3,946 people) of the total population.

**Data: American Community Survey, 2023*

B. Respondent & Neighborhood Demographics

Quantitative Analysis: Who We Reached

Our combined engagement methods yielded over 2,000 resident interactions across St. Louis Park (Table 1). Mobile engagement proved most effective in terms of broad reach, while the survey captured detailed input from those most motivated to share their views.

Table 1: Total Engagement Interactions

Method	Count	Share of Total
Mobile Pop-Ups	1,607	68.8%
Online Survey	633	27.1%
Community Conversations	96	4.1%
Total	2,336	100%

Demographic & Neighborhood Representation Overview

Demographic data was collected through the Community Survey and Community Conversations, providing insights into 729 individuals (633 survey respondents + 96 conversation attendees).

Key Demographic Takeaways:

- Age: Adults aged 25-44 were the most represented group (48.7%), suggesting strong participation from young professionals and families. All adult age groups showed engagement.
- Race/Ethnicity: While the majority of identified participants were White (approx. 83.1% where race was specified), the Mobile Engagement strategy notably reached a significant number of BIPOC residents (456 interactions, or 28.4% of mobile total), especially at events like the Fireworks Celebration at Aquila Park.
- Neighborhoods: The Fern Hill neighborhood had the highest representation among survey respondents. Texa-Tonka, Lenox, and Aquila also showed strong participation rates in the survey and conversations combined.

Demographic Data – Age and Race

**Table 2: Participant Age
 (survey and community conversations, n=729)**

Age Group	Count	Share of Total
12-17	39	5.3%
18-24	13	1.8%
25-34	141	19.3%
35-44	187	25.7%
45-54	113	15.5%
55-64	109	15.0%
65-74	73	10.0%
75+	35	4.8%
Prefer not to answer/unknown	19	2.6%
Total	729	100%

**Most age data came from the survey; conversation data on age was optional captured less consistently.*

Table 3: Participant race and ethnicity (survey conversations where specified, n=704)

Category	Count	Share of Total
White	585	83.1%
Black / African American	36	5.1%
Hispanic / Latino	22	3.1%
Asian	12	1.7%
Jewish	8	1.1%
Two or More Races	39	5.5%
Other	2	0.3%
Total (specified)	704	100%

Notes: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Based on participants who chose to write-in race/ethnicity for this optional question. Mobile engagement showed a higher share of BIPOC overall.

Table 4: Participant Gender Demographics (survey conversations where specified, n=704)

Gender Identity	Count	Approximate Percentage*
Female	585	83.1%
Male	36	5.1%
Nonbinary / Gender Non-Conforming / Other	22	3.1%
Prefer not to Answer / Not Specified	12	1.7%
Total Participants (Specified)	8	1.1%

Notes on Gender Data:

1. The Mobile Engagement dataset did not collect participant gender.
2. Responses like "Other," "Nonbinary," "Gender non-conforming," etc., have been grouped for conciseness.
3. "Prefer not to answer" includes blank responses or explicit choices not to respond.

Data-Driven Policy Recommendations

The recommendations in this report serve as a strategic framework for the city's next decade. They are grounded in the community consensus built through the Vision 4.0 engagement process and structured to be dynamic, flexible, and responsive.

This approach is rooted in the understanding that to achieve large-scale change, all stakeholders, including residents, City staff, and elected officials, must develop a Shared Mental Model (SMM). A mental model is the set of beliefs and expectations that shape how we understand the world and our work. An SMM is a common psychological understanding that allows everyone to interpret issues similarly, coordinate action, and work efficiently toward a common vision.

The following recommendations are based on SMM and serve as a guiding framework to inspire, ideate, and initiate discussion related to the city's needs, priorities, goals, strategies, and comprehensive plan.

They are developmental in nature, designed to be:

Aspirational

They articulate the “North Star” or ideal future and state community desires. They focus on the why and the what, empowering the city to define the how.

Dynamic

These are not rigid, “one-and-done” projects. They are designed to be adaptable to new data, changing contexts, and emerging community feedback. They encourage a “do more/less of this” approach rather than a “did we do that?” checklist.

Responsive

The recommendations are nuanced and human-centered, responding directly to the specific, disaggregated needs of all community members, especially those who have been historically marginalized.

The community's vision is organized into the following five themes - Safety, Infrastructure, Sustainability, Community & Belonging, Housing & Affordability.

Theme 1: Safety

Creating a community where all people are and feel safe.

"Safety" was one of the most consistent and deeply felt themes in our engagement. Residents described a holistic vision of safety that transcends traditional policing. It includes personal safety (feeling safe from crime), public infrastructure safety (safe streets for walking and biking), and psychological safety (feeling a sense of belonging and freedom from discrimination).

We heard a strong desire for community-oriented safety services, where residents know their officers and public safety staff are trusted partners invested in community well-being. Participants also emphasized that the feeling of safety is as important as the statistics, and this feeling is directly linked to well-lit streets, positive neighborhood activity, and, most importantly, knowing and trusting one's neighbors.

What the Data Shows: The Science

The data supports this multi-faceted definition of safety.

- A Top Priority: "Safety & Crime Prevention" was the third most-discussed theme citywide, appearing in 17% of all qualitative comments.
- A Nuanced View: While traditional crime was a concern, "Traffic & Pedestrian Safety" was also a dominant theme, with 12.3% of participants naming it as a top priority.
- A Disaggregated View on Trust: BIPOC residents and renters expressed a more complex view of safety. In community dialogues, they spoke about the need to rebuild trust and address systemic inequities in public safety systems. Data shows BIPOC residents are significantly more likely to prioritize "Diverse City Staff" (41.4%) and "Accountability for City Staff" (16.7%) than white residents (10.9% and 5.5% respectively), linking safety to representation and trust.

Directional Recommendations: The Path Forward

- Recommendation 1 (Aspirational): Foster a holistic, community-wide ecosystem of safety that is rooted in trust, prevention, and well-being for all.
- Recommendation 2 (Dynamic): Continuously adapt and expand the city's public safety model to include and appropriately fund non-officer responses for mental health, social service, and non-emergency calls. This ensures the right response is sent to the right situation regardless of demographic.
- Recommendation 3 (Responsive): Invest in systemic strategies to build and rebuild trust between public safety staff and the community, with a specific, data-driven focus on addressing the unique concerns of BIPOC residents, renters, and youth.
- Recommendation 4 (Dynamic): Prioritize the ongoing investment in "safe infrastructure" by systemically implementing traffic calming measures, protected bike lanes, and pedestrian-first street designs identified in the "Infrastructure" goal.

Theme 2: Infrastructure

Building and maintaining a connected, reliable, and people-first public realm.

What We Heard: The Community Vision

Residents envision a city that "just works." This means reliable utilities, well-maintained roads, and, most importantly, physical infrastructure that connects people to places and to each other. This theme was not just about concrete roads; it was about accessible mobility. Participants frequently spoke of a desire for a city that is safe and easy to navigate for everyone, whether they are in a car, on a bike, in a wheelchair, or walking. The community wants hard infrastructure that encourages people to be out in the community, with safe sidewalks, bike paths that form a true network, and public spaces that are active and welcoming.

What the Data Shows: The Science

The call for better mobility and connectivity was a dominant theme.

- Top-Tier Issue: "Traffic & Pedestrian Safety" (12.3%) and "Bike/Ped Infrastructure" (10.6%) were both top-five priorities for all residents.

- Connectivity is Key: When asked about priorities, participants consistently elevated “Better sidewalks and walkability” and “Better bike infrastructure”.
- Disaggregated View: Renters were significantly more likely (14.2%) than homeowners (8.3%) to prioritize “Bike/Ped Infrastructure,” highlighting a strong desire for safe, reliable transportation alternatives beyond the personal automobile.

Directional Recommendations: The Path Forward

- Recommendation 1 (Aspirational): Reimagine and invest in public streets as “complete systems” that prioritize the safety and mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users, not just the speed of vehicles.
- Recommendation 2 (Dynamic): Accelerate the implementation of the city’s existing bicycle and pedestrian network plans, focusing on creating fully connected and protected networks that are safe for users of all ages and abilities, rather than disconnected segments.
- Recommendation 3 (Responsive): Prioritize systemic traffic calming and pedestrian safety improvements in all neighborhoods, responding to community-identified “hot spots” and ensuring that investments in sidewalks and crossings are equitably distributed.
- Recommendation 4 (Dynamic): Continuously invest in the “invisible infrastructure” of the city, including high-speed broadband, water systems, and sewer maintenance, to ensure reliability and resilience for all residents and businesses.

Theme 3: Sustainability

Leading as responsible stewards of our natural and financial environment.

What We Heard: The Community Vision

St. Louis Park residents are proud of the city’s parks, natural spaces, and legacy of environmental stewardship. The community vision for the next decade is one of bold, proactive leadership in the face of climate change. We heard a clear call to protect and enhance green spaces, expand the city’s tree canopy, and aggressively pursue renewable energy and sustainability goals. This vision also includes financial sustainability, with

residents expecting the city to be a responsible manager of public funds to ensure long-term resilience.

What the Data Shows: The Science

- A Core Value: “Parks & Environment” was a top-four priority for residents, with 16.5% of all participants naming it.
- Broad Support: Qualitative comments consistently centered on “More trees/green space” and support for the city’s “Climate Action Plan”.
- Disaggregated View: This is a unifying theme. Data shows that support for “Parks & Environment” is remarkably consistent across demographic groups, including renters (16.2%), homeowners (16.7%), BIPOC residents (15.5%), and white residents (16.7%). This indicates a powerful, shared mandate for action.

Directional Recommendations: The Path Forward

- Recommendation 1 (Aspirational): Position St. Louis Park as a bold and recognized leader in climate action and environmental sustainability, integrating resilience into all city policies, operations, and planning.
- Recommendation 2 (Dynamic): Accelerate the implementation of the Climate Action Plan, focusing on systemic adoption of renewable energy, expansion of green infrastructure, and city-wide waste reduction programs.
- Recommendation 3 (Responsive): Actively protect, enhance, and expand the city’s natural assets, including the tree canopy, parks, and waterways, ensuring all residents have equitable access to high-quality green space.
- Recommendation 4 (Dynamic): Maintain a balanced and transparent approach to financial stewardship, ensuring the city’s long-term fiscal health to support these community-driven goals.

Theme 4: Community and Belonging

Fostering a vibrant, connected, and inclusive community where everyone belongs.

What We Heard: The Community Vision

Beyond infrastructure and housing, residents crave connection. We heard a deep desire for a city that fosters a “small-town feel” while embracing its “big-city” diversity. This vision includes vibrant public spaces, a thriving arts and business scene, and more opportunities for neighbors to simply meet and interact. Participants want a city that actively fights isolation and builds “social capital.” This theme also includes a strong call for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, with residents stating that true community connection is only possible when everyone feels welcome, valued, and safe to be their authentic selves.

What the Data Shows: The Science

- A Human-Centered City: “Community & Public Space” was the #1 priority for residents (28.5%), and “Economic & Business Development” was also a top-ten theme (9.8%).
- Key Ingredients: Thematic analysis shows this vision is built on “More restaurants/retail” (9.7%), “Arts & Culture” (6.1%), and a desire for more community events.
- Inclusion as a Prerequisite: The call for “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion” was a powerful and distinct theme. Data shows BIPOC residents are more than three times as likely (41.4%) as white residents (10.9%) to name “Diverse City Staff” as a priority, demonstrating a clear link between connection, belonging, inclusion, and seeing oneself represented in city leadership.

Directional Recommendations: The Path Forward

- Recommendation 1 (Aspirational): Cultivate a city rich in “social infrastructure” by investing in vibrant, accessible, and active public spaces, events, and cultural programming that bring people together and foster a deep sense of belonging.
- Recommendation 2 (Dynamic): Foster a thriving and diverse local economy by supporting small businesses, simplifying processes for entrepreneurs, and actively recruiting restaurants, retail, and arts organizations that create “third places” for community connection.

- Recommendation 3 (Responsive): Systematically embed the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) into all city operations—from hiring and promotions to community engagement and contracting—to ensure the city is a model of the inclusive community it seeks to foster.

Theme 5: Housing and Affordability

Ensuring a diverse and attainable range of housing options for all.

What We Heard: The Community Vision

Across all forms of engagement, residents expressed a deep desire for a St. Louis Park where everyone can find a place to call home, regardless of their stage of life, income, or background. Participants frequently described housing as the foundation for community stability, economic mobility, and belonging. If one's housing is not affordable to them, even low cost or free amenities are less accessible. While many residents value the city's vibrant neighborhood character, there is a strong and prevalent concern that rising housing costs, such as higher property taxes, are impacting the affordability of homeownership. We heard a clear call for more "missing middle" housing—options like duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes—that bridge the gap between large apartment buildings and single-family homes. The community's vision of housing is not only about affordability; it's about attainability and diversity of options. However, there is also a need to balance the tax impacts on current homeowners and building affordable housing.

What the Data Shows: The Science

The data directly support the community's narrative. Housing was the most-discussed topic, appearing in 34.5% of all qualitative comments.

- Affordability is the Top Concern: "Housing Affordability" was the #1 theme citywide, with 26% of all participants citing it as a top priority.
- Renters Feel the Pressure: This concern is more pronounced among renters.
- The "Missing Middle" is Missing: "Housing Options/Diversity" was the second-most-coded theme, with participants explicitly naming the need for a wider variety of housing types.
- A Disaggregated View: BIPOC participants in community conversations spoke to the

systemic barriers that have historically prevented access to homeownership and the need for new pathways to build generational wealth.

Directional Recommendations: The Path Forward

- Recommendation 1 (Aspirational): Ensure St. Louis Park is a community where people of all income levels and life stages can find and maintain a home they can afford.
- Recommendation 2 (Dynamic): Systematically increase the diversity and supply of “missing middle” housing by incentivizing and updating zoning to support the development of duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Recommendation 3 (Dynamic): Expand and promote programs that protect existing affordable units (both market-rate and subsidized) from conversion and strengthen renter stability.
- Recommendation 4 (Responsive): Address systemic barriers to building wealth by developing and promoting accessible and equitable homeownership programs, co-designed with and targeted to support first-time homebuyers and BIPOC residents.

Leading with Love: A Vision of Connection for St. Louis Park 4.0

The Philosophy: The philosophy of “Lead with Love” recognizes that true improvement isn’t just about efficiency—it’s about fostering deep connection and belonging. To “lead with love” means to govern with empathy. It means recognizing that safety is about trust, housing is about roots, and infrastructure is about connection. The following synthesis transforms the previous section’s data-driven recommendations into human-centered community pillars to guide St. Louis Park through the next decade.

We invite the City of St. Louis Park to consider the following commitments.

Community Pillar 1: Spaces to Belong, Place to Call Home

Theme: Pathways to Rootedness — From “Building Units” to “Building Neighbors”

The Synthesis: While the data-driven recommendations identify the need for “Missing Middle” housing, the community pillar provides the soul of this strategy: protecting the ability of young families to plant roots and seniors to stay. We are shifting the metric of success from “units permitted” to “ownership sustained.”

The “Leading with Love” Commitment:

- Protect the Starter Stock (The “North Star”): We will aggressively protect our naturally occurring affordable housing—the humble starter home—from investor speculation and teardowns. As one resident noted, this is the “only entry point” for the next generation.
- Support the Lifecycle of Ownership: Affordability doesn’t end at the closing table. We will support residents through the hidden costs of ownership (repairs, energy upgrades) to prevent displacement.

Actionable Strategies:

- “First Look” Policy: Partner with land trusts to give income-qualified families an exclusive window to bid on starter homes before corporate investors.
- “Fixer-Upper” & “Senior Safety” Grants: A matching grant program for essential repairs (HVAC, insulation) for young families, and accessibility retrofits (ramps, grab bars) for seniors aging in place.
- Diversify the Middle: Update zoning to incentivize owner-occupied condos and townhomes (triplexes/duplexes) as a bridge between renting and the single-family market.

Community Pillar 2: Community Thriving

Theme: Neighborhood Hearts — Fostering “Third Places” Where We Meet

The Synthesis: The data-driven recommendation highlights “Community & Belonging” as a top priority. The community pillar diagnoses why some feel disconnected: residents in neighborhoods like Triangle and Lenox lack intimate gathering spots. Leading with love means ensuring social connection is walkable and accessible, not just a car ride away to a large commercial center.

The “Leading with Love” Commitment:

- Combating Isolation: We will treat loneliness as a public health crisis and view “Third Places” (public parks, coffee shops, small markets) as essential social infrastructure.
- Micro-Scale Vitality: We will not exclusively focus on “commercial corridors,” we will also support small, neighborhood-scale hubs that anchor social life.

Actionable Strategies:

- “Neighborhood Corner” Zoning: Create overlays that permit low-impact micro-retail (bakeries, coffee) in specific residential nodes, strictly regulated to protect peace while promoting connection.
- Adaptive Reuse Grants: Incentivize the conversion of historic/underused structures (e.g., old service stations) into community gathering spaces.
- Main Street Micro-Pilots: Test temporary pop-up commercial zones in parks or intersections to gauge community interest before building permanently.

Community Pillar 3: Holistic Safety and Infrastructure

Theme: Safety Through Connection and Care

The Synthesis: The data-driven recommendations redefine safety as “holistic”—spanning physical, infrastructure, and psychological safety. The community pillar adds a crucial layer: Intergenerational Vitality. Safety isn’t just policing; it’s a youth shoveling a senior’s driveway. It’s infrastructure that respects the fragile walker as much as the fast car.

The “Leading with Love” Commitment:

- Trust & Representation: We acknowledge that for BIPOC residents, safety is linked to representation. We commit to fostering and maintaining an inclusive workplace where BIPOC individuals belong across all levels and departments.
- Design for the Vulnerable: We will audit our streets and parks not just for “code compliance,” but for “usability” by our most vulnerable—children and seniors.

Actionable Strategies:

- Intergenerational Service Corps: Create a civic program pairing youth (seeking service hours/credits) with seniors for snow shoveling and yard work—building safety through relationships.
- Universal Design Audits: Review infrastructure for “Senior Usability” (shaded seating, smooth walking loops, longer crosswalk times) to ensure elders can move freely and safely.
- Maintain and Build Upon an Inclusive Workplace: Develop and/or maintain support at all levels across all departments for attracting and retaining BIPOC leaders. This may include, but is not limited to, internship programs for local BIPOC students to build a leadership pipeline, regular surveys for existing staff to identify BIPOC staff perspectives, and valuing the often ‘invisible work’ of BIPOC staff.

Community Pillar 4: Environmental Stewardship

Theme: Stewardship as Culture — Incentivizing a Resilient Landscape

The Synthesis: The data-driven recommendations establish St. Louis Park as a “Climate Leader.” The community pillar matures this vision, moving from top-down mandates to bottom-up culture. Residents don’t just want the city to manage nature; they want to be empowered to heal their own patch of earth.

The “Leading with Love” Commitment:

- Ecological Restoration: We view our tree canopy and green spaces not as “decoration,” but as vital infrastructure for health and resilience.
- Cultural Inclusion: We recognize that connection to the land is cultural. We will support urban agriculture that reflects the diverse heritage of our immigrant neighbors.

Actionable Strategies:

- “Living Lawns” Ordinance: Ensure city codes protect and encourage native landscapes and pollinator gardens, replacing punitive “weed” ordinances with educational “managed landscape” guidelines.
- Culturally Relevant Urban Ag: Allocate plots in community gardens specifically for culturally relevant crops, turning these spaces into cross-cultural exchange hubs.
- Climate Resilience Cost-Sharing: Launch grants for residents replacing impervious driveways/patios with rain gardens to manage stormwater locally.

Conclusion

The voices of St. Louis Park residents convey a community that values its distinct identity, takes pride in its welcoming nature and green areas, shows concern for public safety and education, and wants to meet community needs respectful of the character of neighborhoods. While there were diverse reasons and viewpoints for people’s responses, the response highlights a community that cares deeply and is strongly invested in its future.

The path forward will center on leadership that brings people together and builds bridges. Focusing on trust, discovering shared ground, and making real progress toward realizing the community’s vision. By working together, St. Louis Park can capitalize on its strengths and create a future that respects its history while providing resilience and new opportunities.

Appendix

Previous Visions

To determine our future path, we need to evaluate our past; thus, the next section offers a brief history of previous visions.

Vision 1.0 (1995) – Acknowledging Diversity

St. Louis Park's inaugural vision centered on advocating an identity and philosophy that recognizes "**Diversity is a natural part of everyday life,**" which should enrich the entire community. Recommendations aimed at fostering acceptance by providing **diversity training** for school staff, encouraging the expansion of involvement of religious institutions, and promoting **diverse role models** among city and school district employees. Housing goals at the time aimed to ensure a **broad spectrum of quality housing**.

A foundational aspiration is manifested in developing key physical assets to foster community identity through social and cultural hubs, such as downtown areas and recreational centers. Significant infrastructure suggestions involved establishing these social-cultural hubs within the area bordered by Excelsior Boulevard, West 36th Street, Highway 100, and Monterey Drive, as well as expanding the trail network.

Successful Vision 1.0 implementation included significant community developments such as the Rec Center/Aquatic Center, Wolfe Park, the Amphitheatre, and the Excelsior & Grand mixed-use development.

Vision 2.0 (2007) – Cultivating Connection

Uniquely, Vision 2.0 engaged residents through a Community-Based Participatory Research methodology called *Appreciative Inquiry*, culminating in a community publication: *Vision St. Louis Park: A Book of Dreams*.

Vision 2.0 codified the elements of a connected community and created action teams to ensure progress and accountability. The eight aspects of community vision, paraphrased below:

- Celebration of Arts & Culture
- Community Events
- Built Environment
- Places to Belong
- Gathering Places
- Places to Call Home
- Access to Mobility and Transportation
- Strength in Diversity

Vision 3.0 (2017) – *Seeking Inclusivity & Equity*

Vision 3.0 'met people where they are', especially identities and communities that are often left out of the decision-making process. Thus, inviting, setting, and making space at the table for people within their neighborhoods was critical to exploring current needs and future trends.

Equity and Inclusion became the paramount resident value, mentioned at over two-thirds (68.42%) of neighborhood meetings. The shift focused on developing the community's "software" (social connections) and explicitly committing to becoming a "**Leader in Racial Equity and Inclusion**" and achieving **measurable, systemic outcomes**. This included recommendations to hire a Racial Equity Coordinator and implement equity and inclusion training for city committees, neighborhood leaders, and business leaders. The process also highlighted that people of color were more likely to feel "**disconnected, sad, lonely, or isolated**" compared to white residents.

Community Survey - Neighborhood Representation

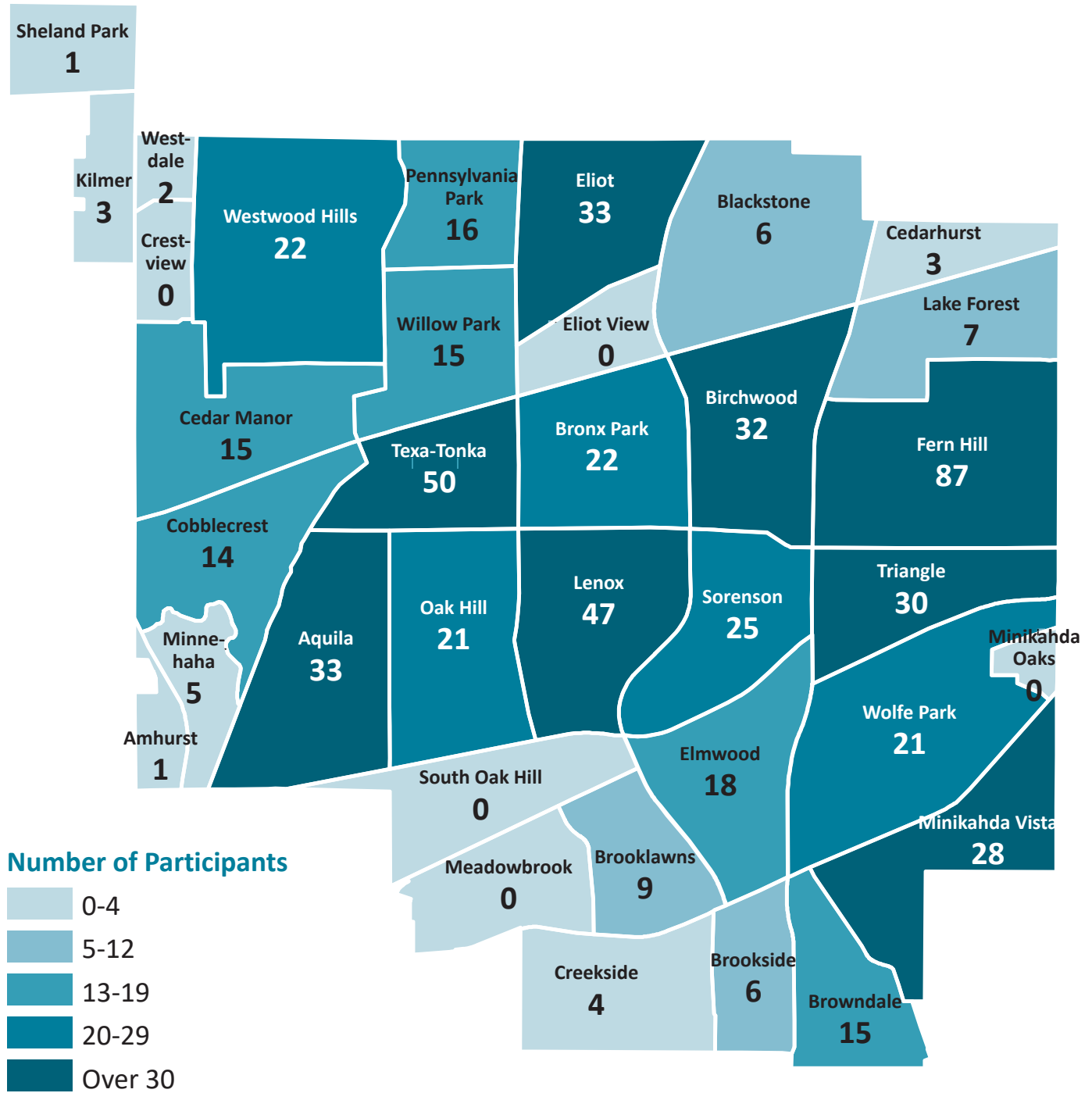
Table 5: Representation by Neighborhood (Survey Only, N=633)

Representation Level	Neighborhood	Respondent Count
High Representation (30+ Respondents)	Fern Hill	87
	Texa-Tonka	50
	Lenox	47
	Aquila	33
	Eliot	33
	Birchwood	32
	Triangle	30
	Subtotal (High)	312 (49.3%)
Medium Representation (15–29 Respondents)	Minikahda Vista	28
	Sorenson	25
	Bronx Park	22
	Westwood Hills	22
	Oak Hill	21
	Wolfe Park	21
	Elmwood	18
	Pennsylvania Park	16
	Browndale	15
	Cedar Manor	15

Table 5: Representation by Neighborhood (Survey Only, N=633)

Representation Level	Neighborhood	Respondent Count
	Willow Park	15
Subtotal (Medium)		218 (34.4%)
Lower Representation	Cobblecrest	14
(<15 Respondents)	Brooklawns	9
	Lake Forest	7
	Blackstone	6
	Brookside	6
	Minnehaha	5
	Creekside	4
	Cedarhurst	3
	Kilmer	3
	Westdale	2
	Amhurst	1
	Shelard Park	1
Subtotal (Lower)		61 (9.6%)
Other / Non-Specific	Prefer not to answer	29
	Other (Neighboring cities, etc.)	13
Subtotal (Other)		42 (6.6%)
TOTAL		633 (100%)

Participants By Neighborhood Providing Demographic Information



Total: 633 Participants

Residents' reported neighborhoods. The darker the blue is, the greater the concentration of respondents.

Neighborhood-Specific Analysis

The following sections break down sentiment and perspectives by neighborhood.

Note: Key themes are derived from frequently occurring words and phrases in respondent feedback.

Fern Hill (n=87)

- Themes: Safety, Community Connection, Environmental Sustainability.
- Strengths: Residents value the “community feel” and “location.”
 - Question: What keeps you in St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Our parks and trails, friendly neighbors, and our shared values.”
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Traffic & Safety: Strong desire for calmer streets and finished construction.
 - Housing: Concerns about property taxes and maintaining affordability.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Safety, cleanliness, peacefulness, no more road construction PLEASE!!”

Texa-Tonka (n=50)

- Themes: Vibrancy, Local Businesses, Inclusivity.
- Strengths: High appreciation for “proximity to restaurants/shopping” and “parks.”
 - Question: What keeps you in St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Parks, proximity to restaurants, and recreation.”
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Community Spaces: Desire for more shared green spaces and community gathering spots.
 - Support for Vulnerable Populations: Calls for mental health support and homeless housing.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Shared common Green Space/Garden space, intentional community/living support space.”

Lenox (n=47)

- Themes: Walkability, Small Business Support, Renewable Energy.
- Strengths: Valued for its “open and accepting nature” and convenience.
 - Question: What keeps you in St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Its open and accepting nature... convenient.”
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Commercial Vitality: Filling empty storefronts and supporting small businesses.
 - Sustainability: Specific requests for solar investments on public buildings.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Investment in small business... Investment in renewable energy like solar.”

Eliot (n=33)

- Themes: Inclusivity, Pedestrian Access, Aging in Place.
- Strengths: Long-term residents cite “support networks” and location as key anchors.
 - Question: What keeps you in St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “I am now a senior citizen and my support network is here.”
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Representation: diverse representation in extracurriculars and city programs.
 - Pedestrian Safety: Creating more pedestrian-friendly areas.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “More inclusive in extra curriculars. More representation and diversity in theater.”

Aquila (n=32)

- Themes: Economic Diversity, “Urban/Suburban” Balance, Youth Support.
- Strengths: Residents love the “quirky restaurants” and “nice neighborhood parks.”
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Financial Literacy: Teaching youth about finance and contribution.
 - Mixed-Income Housing: Support for housing types that allow economic diversity.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “To be a welcoming community with economic diversity...”

embracing both our suburban and urban vibes.”

Birchwood (n=32)

- Themes: Education, Housing Market Stability, Walkability.
- Strengths: Described as a “tight-knit neighborhood” that is safe for families.
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Housing Balance: Managing the “teardown” trend to maintain character and affordability.
 - School Investment: Keeping education strong is a top priority.
 - Question: How can St. Louis Park support the next generation?
 - Sample response: “Encourage and maintain home ownership without throwing a McMansion in the neighborhood.”

Triangle (n=30)

- Themes: “Main Street” Feel, Cultural Spaces, Youth Activities.
- Strengths: The skatepark and respectful neighbors are highlighted highlights.
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Third Places: Desire for independent coffee shops and cultural gathering spaces.
 - Youth Resources: More outdoor resources and affordable activities for kids.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Independent coffeeshops, cultural spaces and a main street.”

Minikahda Vista (n=28)

- Themes: Balance of Growth, School Excellence, Senior Support.
- Strengths: The parks and open spaces are critical for families and grandchildren.
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Generational Balance: ensuring the city supports seniors as much as youth.
 - Charter Schools: Some desire to support alternative schooling options.
 - Question: How can St. Louis Park support the next generation?
 - Sample response: “The next big generation move is toward seniors. I think that should be your concern.”

Sorenson (n=25)

- Themes: Nature/Ecology, Civic Excellence, Native Landscaping.
- Strengths: Residents appreciate the “low-key, noncompetitive” excellence and police service.
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Ecological Health: Strong push for native plants, reducing turfgrass, and protecting pollinators.
 - Education: Continued support for school excellence.
 - Question: How can St. Louis Park support the next generation?
 - Sample response: “By reducing turfgrass and increasing plant diversity... we can build landscapes that clean our air.”

Westwood Hills (n=22)

- Themes: Nature Center Access, Innovation, Cost of Living.
- Strengths: The Westwood Hills Nature Center is a crown jewel for this area.
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Social Hubs: Desire for a “one-stop shop” for dining/bars that is walkable.
 - Innovation: Calls for the city to be a leader in environmental and transport innovation.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “A one stop shop for young people/families - shops, restaurants, bar scene that is walkable.”

Bronx Park (n=21)

- Themes: “Small Town” Feel, Human-Scale Design, Trees.
- Strengths: Valued for feeling like a “small town” despite being close to everything.
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Urban Design: Preference for “human-scale” retail (sidewalk seating) over large developments like West End.
 - Home Ownership: Reducing rentals to promote stable ownership.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Retail areas designed for people (not cars)... sidewalk seating, smaller scale.”

Oak Hill (n=21)

- Themes: Urban Farming, Zoning Reform, Walkability.
- Strengths: Safe, affordable, and highly bikeable/walkable.
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Food Systems: Dreams of community farming and culturally relevant crops.
 - Zoning: Support for ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units) and loosening single-family zoning.
 - Question: How can St. Louis Park support the next generation?
 - Sample response: “Support home renovations and expansions, support ADUs, loosen single-family zoning.”

Wolfe Park (n=21)

- Themes: Sustainability, Walkability, STEM Education.
- Strengths: The Excelsior & Grand area creates a highly valued walkable environment.
- Opportunities for Improvement:
 - Green Tech: continued investment in EV charging and trees.
 - Education: Balance of STEM, arts, and trades in schools.
 - Question: What are your dreams for St. Louis Park?
 - Sample response: “Continuing progress for a sustainable walkable community to live and work in!”

