
City of Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Strategic Planning Project

Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Introduction

The first step to a successful strategic planning project requires engaging internal and external stakeholders. In this step, the Baker Tilly team worked closely with the City's project team to design a plan that factored and included various stakeholder interests and groups within and outside of the organization.

After establishing an engagement plan, the Baker Tilly team began the discovery interview phase which primarily focused on data collection and facilitating internal interviews, focus group discussions and benchmark research efforts. The completion of this task enabled the consulting team with necessary foundation of data, facts and understanding for eventually developing an effective strategic plan, promote buy-in and support, and ensure alignment with the policy intent and priorities of the City.

The next step of the stakeholder engagement process involved engaging external stakeholders. The involvement of community members is a cornerstone of a successful strategic plan and based on the stakeholder engagement plan, the Baker Tilly team facilitated numerous community focus group sessions as well as distributing a resident questionnaire.

This memo provides a full summary of the major themes identified from the internal discovery interviews, the community focus group sessions, and also the results of the resident questionnaire.

Stakeholder Engagement Participants

Elected Officials

- Amanda Salazar, Alderperson
- Andre Walton, Alderperson
- Barb Felde, Council President
- Charles Adams, City Attorney
- Dean Dekker, Alderperson
- Grazilla Perralla, Alderperson
- Leslie Laster, Alderperson
- Markus Savagilo, Alderperson
- Meredith DeBruin, City Clerk
- Natasha Torry, Municipal Court Judge
- Roberta Filicky-Peneski, Council Vice-President
- Ryan Sorenson, Mayor
- Trey Mitchell, Alderperson

Community Focus Group Sessions

- Small Employers
- Large Employers
- Neighborhoods
- Social Services

City Staff Members

- Chad Pelishek, Director of Planning & Development
- Christopher Domagalski, Police Chief
- David Biebel, Director of Public Works
- Derek Muench, Director of Parking and Transit
- Emily Rendall Araujo, Senior Services Director
- Eric Bushman, Director of IT
- Eric Montellano, Fire Chief
- Garrett Erickson, Library Director
- Joe Trueblood, Water Utility Superintendent
- Kaitlyn Krueger, Director of Finance
- Todd Wolf, City Administrator

Community Focus Group Sessions

- Tourism
- Housing
- Families and Schools
- Community, Arts, and Culture
- Elevating Diverse Voices

Internal Stakeholder Summary

During the interview discussions, the Baker Tilly team asked targeted questions to identify and understand key organizational, operational, financial, service delivery, and other issues or concerns relevant to the current state and future strategic direction of the City of Sheboygan.

Following the conversations with the City's elected officials and staff members, the project team synthesized the results to identify common themes that surfaced during the discussions. The common themes identified are as followed:

- Municipal Infrastructure, primarily roads and facilities, is a significant concern.
- Improvement of the effectiveness of the City's communication and engagement with the public is a concern, including a lot of criticism of the city's website and the resultant proliferation of city websites for specific departments/programs.
- (Library, Police, Public Works, Senior Activity Center, ShoreLine Metro, Water)
- Housing choice – concerns about the availability of affordable workforce housing, senior housing and potential opposition to increasing densities.
- Economic Development and Tourism
- “Operational Excellence” – people/process/technology issues to address, including diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging
- Quality of life – parks/recreation/library/arts and culture, etc.

Additionally, the results of the interviews also revealed some insight into some of the City's current successes, strengths and opportunity areas for improvement. The specific areas identified during the interviews are as followed:

Successes / Strengths	Improvement Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Response Time • Continued Improvement to Senior Services • Economic Development / Redevelopment Efforts • Internal Technology • Investment in Parks and Recreation • Investment in Parks and Recreation • Large Water Capacity • “Malibu of the Midwest” • Neighborhood Association Program • Neighborhood Association Program • Outdoor Amenities • Parking • Proactive Staff • Public Transit System • Redevelopment Efforts • “Sheboygan has a lot to offer” • Strong Staff • Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Collaboration / Community Engagement • Overall Communication (<i>internally and externally</i>) • Community Development • Housing • Internal Business Processes • Technology (<i>website</i>) • Allocation of Resources • Infrastructure (<i>mostly roads</i>) • Clean Air Initiatives • Focus on Southside of the City • Shoreline Investments • City Limit Expansion • Economic Development • Staffing Levels • Attracting High Quality Employees • Revenue

External Stakeholder Summary

During the external stakeholder engagement phase, the Baker Tilly team met with various community focus groups and as a result of those conversations some common themes about the City were revealed.

Here is a summary of the common themes from the community focus group sessions:

Shopping, Restaurants, and Downtown

- There is a large variety of and high-quality small businesses
- There are many good restaurant options
- There is a lack of shopping opportunities for certain necessities, such as clothing and specialty grocery, which leads to people leaving Sheboygan to fulfill their needs
- Downtown is walkable and has potential, but parking needs to be evaluated and addressed to better support businesses; vacant storefronts should be addressed.
- Downtown and other successful restaurant/entertainment areas could be connected more strongly, through the street, pedestrian, and transit network. Examples were the river, South Pier, 8th Street, and 3 Sheeps. The City could consider additional wayfinding signage.

Community

- Many participants mentioned a positive few of the city as a safe community with a small town/Midwest feel
- The location is a strength and could be used as an advantage in marketing efforts.
- There is not a consensus on community inclusion. Some people mentioned a strong sense of community and that people are very friendly. Other people said that it can be difficult for new residents (especially young professionals, but also others) to get involved and meet people after moving there.
- Regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, the City is making efforts to evaluate internal and external policies to update its practices and studying other communities for best practices. However, focus group participants that weighed in on the diversity, equity, and inclusion topic, indicated that there is a long way to go to change embedded culture and policy practices, both within the culture of the community, as well as within City government.
- There was not a consensus in how affordable the city is, even among people who have lived in bigger cities prior to moving (back) to Sheboygan. Generally, participants stated that the City is not easily affordable for people in working class or factory jobs, single parents, and those without a college degree, while it is very affordable for those in higher paying jobs. Please also see the discussion of affordable housing below.
- Challenges were identified regarding policies and practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts (including outdated policies as well as criticisms of this planning process)

Communication, Collaboration, and Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities

- The City was commended for the approachability of the staff and how easy the City is for businesses to work with.
- Communication and collaboration were often mentioned as a helpful role/service from the City across many of the focus groups.
- Many groups wanted more and proactive communication from the City and wanted the City to take the lead (or at least designate a leader) in beginning collaboration with different actors in the same sector. For example, a lead role for the City was suggested within the Social Services Sector to assist in prioritization, communication, collaboration, and reduction in the duplication of efforts.
- The City could continue to raise awareness through communication on what they (and partner entities) are doing to address issues and make progress, including celebrating positive events and community “wins” in a timely manner.
- There seems to be a lack of understanding and/or miscommunication surrounding different actors’ and entities’ roles and responsibilities within the city. For example, within the tourism/regional marketing space, the City could lead discussion of goals and outcomes, and then offer more transparency about and coordination of different entities’ roles within the city.

Businesses and Workforce

- All businesses are having difficulties finding workers. Larger businesses in Sheboygan hire many kinds of workers, from factory workers to scientists with PhDs.
- It was generally agreed upon that workers in manufacturing are the most difficult to find, which can make it difficult to retain and grow a Sheboygan-based business location. The large employers recognized that they sometimes compete for the same talent. Additionally, they have seen people leave the area if they can work remotely.
- It is particularly difficult to recruit young professionals to the area from other parts of the country, especially if they are single. However, many employers have had generally good results in employee retention. Some employers are actively providing events and activities to integrate employees into the community. However, there may be opportunities to make this a community-wide effort through a young professional's group or other community-based activities.
- A lack of available housing and difficulty finding childcare were frequently cited as inhibiting additional workers (especially manufacturing/blue collar workers) from relocating to Sheboygan.
- Large employers recruit nationwide, with many new employees taking jobs without visiting the city beforehand. They praised the social media efforts of the City, because it has been effective in enticing and attracting new employees to the area; businesses would like the City to keep this up; additional recruitment assistance from the community would be welcome.
- For some small businesses in the tourism sector, locals can be unsupportive of price points or food and entertainment offerings for regular outings, particularly in the non-tourism season. This can cause businesses to struggle in the off-season to reach consumers and support revenues.
- Small employers, especially, noted that the business community is very collaborative and will always step up to help each other out. Some indicated a strong relationship with the City; others did not have that relationship. Small businesses noted that they would appreciate assistance with formalizing their network to strengthen it further. Large employers didn't mention this issue; however their focus group was centered more on employee recruitment and retention.

Community Amenities

- People seem to love both the lakefront and the other natural amenities surrounding the city
- People enjoy the entertainment that is available, but would also appreciate more "active" entertainment; that is, something more than watching a show or walking through an art gallery
- Many people brought up a lack of activities for teenagers and the young adult (18-20 year old) cohorts, as well as a lack of places for young professionals.
- People seemed to agree that there were a lot of activities available for younger kids. The Community Recreation programs were good and appreciated.
- A Third Space (public social space) option would be appreciated, especially if it had something for all ages
- Childcare is expensive and difficult to find.
- Public transportation is good in the city but doesn't serve the west part of the county well. It should also be reviewed for K-12 students.
- There was not a consensus on the quality of public schools, especially compared to "suburban" schools. It may be a difference in perception between people with and without kids in the schools; for example, the online ratings that people see when searching for a house compared to satisfaction once they interact with the schools.

Housing

- There is a reported housing shortage in the city. It can be difficult to find an affordable home for first time home buyers in a desirable price range.
- It was reported that new homes are typically being built in the \$300,000+ range, which is appropriate and affordable for some people but not for others.
- There are not many small new homes being built within city limits because it is difficult to make a profit on smaller homes in the current market. The City could look at potential incentives for this type of housing if that was a priority.

Housing Continued...

- There were concerns stated about a comparatively high property tax rate.
- There seems to be two types of rentals: high-end apartments and standalone older houses/units in neighborhoods. There are some reported difficulties with regulation/enforcement on standalone homes, both in terms of enforcing standards on landlords and on enforcement on tenant actions that filters up to landlords. This issue could be further studied for a policy review.
- Housing is very difficult to find, especially for those with yearly wages in the \$40,000 range and is impacting the workforce

Community Focus Group Session Details

Small Employers

Strengths

Business community and variety

- Large variety of/ diverse and high-quality small businesses
- The small business community is tight knit and supportive, both formally and informally, and most businesses are willing to help each other out.
- They seem to understand agglomeration effects very well

City/Government

- There are both financial and other resources and assistance available through the City, County, SCEDC, etc.
- City staff is very accessible and approachable
- Plenty of job opportunities
- COL and natural attributes are a draw

Location

- Downtown and the City are very walkable
- Affordable place to do business, especially compared to a bigger city
- Can catch people on their way to Door County; has led to people staying in Sheboygan rather than going all the way to Door County

Community

- The people of Sheboygan County show up, tell their friends, and want to come back for more

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

Workforce

- Hard to find employees

City/Government

- Permitting process is long and complicated, to the point that it stands in the way of business expansions
- City isn't proactively checking in with small businesses; would be most helpful during crises
- It can be difficult to figure out who you need to talk to as a small business owner
- They plan a lot but don't (have the staff to) follow through

Downtown

- First impressions aren't the best
- Parking needs to be rethought
 - Meters are broken and require quarters; visitors frequently complain, and they disincentivize lingering (in a good way) in downtown
 - Customers get parking tickets while shopping
- Vacant storefronts need to be filled and "dilapidated" ones need to be kept up
- Not active or vibrant after a certain time of night (~8 PM)

Wishlist

- A primary point of contact for small business owners
 - This liaison could also be proactive with businesses, letting them know about grants and other resources
- More collaboration and easier collaboration
 - A small business group chat or similar to find and network with other small businesses that you don't know yet
 - Maybe a collaboration effort between the City, the Chamber, SCEDC, etc., that results in a website with resources
 - A portal or similar to connect businesses to other businesses within and around the City for when they need work or services (think insurance, contractors, etc.) to keep money local
- Wayfinding for free parking around downtown
- Intentional and more active business (and visitor) recruitment

Notes

Collaboration

There are several different organizations that have to do with small businesses (City, Chamber, SCEDC, informal groups/connections, even Tourism), but there's a disconnect as to each of their roles and responsibilities; for example, who puts on events? Clarifying this would be a good recommendation.

To take it one step further, getting all of these groups formalized (if necessary) and working together would definitely help strengthen the business community and make it stronger and more appealing of a place to do business.

Planning and Vision

The City has many plans but hasn't been/ hasn't had the capacity to move forward with them very quickly.

There is also no common vision, which hinders growth and development. For example, what do they want with growth? How do you grow without losing your small-town feel? What's the vision for downtown?

Once the city (lowercase c) figures out a common vision, the City (uppercase C) needs to make sure they're "taking people along for the ride" and involving the city in the process.

Neighborhoods

Strengths

Businesses

- Good restaurants
- Blue Harbor is great to have so close

Location and Amenities

- The lake offers fishing, clean beaches, etc., and has good access
- Outdoor activities/amenities in addition to the lake, such as golf and parks and nature trails; this is what brings people to the area in the summer
- Proximity to Green Bay, Milwaukee, Fond du Lac, and even Chicago and Madison

Community

- People are very friendly
- It's a safe community
- Great schools- nearby
- Affordable, especially regarding housing

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

Shopping and Entertainment

- Shopping, generally, but especially clothing shopping anywhere other than somewhere like Kohls or Meijer; there aren't enough stores in town and people frequently leave to do this
- Lacking entertainment options, especially for teens and younger adults (early 20s)
- Lack of grocery stores toward the center of downtown

The Lake

- Wave runners on the lake are dangerous; "other problems" noted, such as trash pick-up
- It seems like no one is responsible for the lakefront

Community and Culture

- Housing Affordability
- The city could be more welcoming
- Diversity and inclusion efforts need improvement
- Things are sometimes slow to change
- The homeless population seems to be growing

Wishlist

Neighborhoods

- Neighborhood Associations should offer information/ welcome packs to new neighbors
- Neighborhood Associations could do more with more funding
- Better code enforcement to get people to take better care of their yards
- Limit Airbnbs to keep the neighborhood feel

Recreation

- Bring back the skating rink
- Do something about the quarry

Connectivity

- Connect the river in more places
- Another off ramp from the highway
- Better signage around the City/wayfinding
- Make sure people know about the large trash pickup option

City

- Keep the Dumpster Days, maybe add more and/or add a Shred Day or add community aspect around Dumpster Day

Notes

They really focused on the city's amenities and gave good insight as to what could help draw people here, as well as what the community is lacking and needs more of. They also have a strong sense of community and want more opportunities to bring neighbors outside and together, and they get frustrated when people do not reflect well on the neighborhood and/or community (such as with yards full of trash, neglecting home maintenance, or putting in rentals and/or short term rentals).

Social Services

Strengths

City and Amenities

- The City does a good job keeping social media up to date
- You can find almost anything you need (with a few exceptions), from culture to daily needs
- Sheboygan County seems to be becoming more forward and progressive thinking

Community

- People are always willing to step up and volunteer
- Active and connected, even for new people
- Small town feel – people want to take care of the community
- People are very hard working, could be due to blue collar background
- There are multibillion-dollar, established, family-owned companies that care about and are willing to invest in the community

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

Culture

- Small town feel can lead to a reliance on “this is how it’s always been done”
- Community has misconceptions of how simple it is for people to change their circumstances

Affordability

- 1/3 of the County is one paycheck away from disaster
- Not affordable for everyone, such as single parents without a college degree; cost-of-livign isn’t that much lower than people believe it is
- Childcare is expensive and hard to find; could employers play a role in solving this?

Wishlist

Collaboration

- **Bringing everyone (nonprofits, businesses, the City, etc.) to the table to solve issues.**
- Having an easier way to collaborate between nonprofits and **break down silos**, which would help decrease duplication of efforts within the community/ make efforts more effective
- Having an easier way to find resources, such as financial counselors for their clients, etc.
- Being able to offer community-wide holistic care for an individual
- The City taking the lead on issues rather than the social sector, at least sometimes, and being more involved in the nonprofit sector
- A coordinator and nonprofit center to encourage collaboration and reduce duplication of resources
 - “Chief Collaboration Officer”
- Local businesses (small and large) extending their support of the community to offering funds, and doing so in a more strategic way than they currently are; a collaboration officer could help facilitate this strategy

Notes

The nonprofit/ social services sector wants help collaborating within the sector as well as with others in the community to reduce duplication of efforts and become more effective for those that they serve.

Large Employers

Strengths

City, Amenities, and Affordability

- Lower cost-of-living than nearby larger cities
- Things to do (such as arts and restaurants) are increasing and improving
- Small town/Midwest feel; safe
 - **Many groups have listed this objective statement as a positive**
- People are welcoming and groups exist BUT it's hard to find them
- There's something for everyone – downtown, farmers market, Lake, riverfront, Road America fishing, golfing, beauty services
- There's a good start for entertainment and nightlife, though it does need to be improved
- Proximity to Green Bay and Milwaukee

Work

- Higher pay for factory workers (anecdotally) than other larger cities. Employers working on flexibility
- Some employers are taking community building into their own hands to help with workforce attraction

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

Workforce

- They all struggle to find employees, from factory workers to scientists and engineers with PhDs, though the former is the toughest.
- Local businesses are all competing for the same talent, especially factory workers, as they grow
- Remote work has allowed people to leave; they tend to move closer to family, especially if they can't find childcare

City, Community, and Amenities

- It's difficult for new people to get integrated into the community, especially younger singles
- Nightlife and entertainment, especially for young professionals, needs to be improved; employers currently point to Green Bay and Milwaukee for these opportunities
- Transit inside of City is great, but is less so toward the western side of the County
- Shopping (clothing/footwear, specialty grocery, etc.) is a shortcoming, especially for 21-30 year olds who are taking a day trip down to Trader Joe's, so they're not only taking grocery money out of Sheboygan, but also money spent on the rest of the day

Affordability

- Affordable entry level homes and rentals are hard to find, such as for factory level workers
- Childcare is expensive and hard to find

Wishlist

City and Amenities

- Prospective employees are looking at social media to decide if they will move here without visiting, so keep it REALLY high quality; websites and content look great, even though many people have never heard of Sheboygan.
- Some way for new people to get integrated into the community
- Schools; rankings matter when people are deciding what districts to live in, so it would be nice to work on improving those

Employers and Workforce

- They may appreciate help with the community side of recruitment
- Proactively looking toward Fond du Lac for workers since HWY 23 will be changing to four lanes

Notes

Community

Getting new people, especially younger singles (who tend to be more introverted if they're engineers, etc.), integrated into the community and helping them find people "like them" is difficult. Could this be eased with a specific young professionals networking group? Perhaps each company in the area could sponsor a happy hour, morning coffee meet up, brown bag lunch speaker, or other activity each month. This would also help support local businesses and give them exposure.

Housing and Childcare

Both of these issues are incredible two-fold: there are issues both finding AND affording them, especially for factory level workers making ~\$40,000 per year. Coupled with the availability of remote work, employers are seeing workers move away to be closer to their families who can help take care of children. Is there a way that we could try to make Sheboygan a draw for the older parents so they move closer to their children rather than vice versa? Make it a retirement destination? How is senior housing?

Tourism

Strengths

City and Amenities

- Recreational options within the County; Road America, lake, state parks, golf
- City and boardwalk are very clean and user friendly
- City Hall is easy to work with, responsive, and straightforward
- Many large businesses for this size of city
- Good food and drink in the city

Location and Affordability

- Proximity to Chicago, Milwaukee, and Green Bay is a strategic location
- COL is 29% less than Milwaukee for medical, housing, transportation

Marketing and Communication

- Visit Sheboygan has successful marketing campaigns in niche places

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

City and Amenities

- Not enough nightlife for young professionals or opportunities for them to meet other people like them
 - Specifically, there's a gap between nightlife for 21/22 year olds and older blue collar workers
- Not a ton of "active" entertainment where you're not just sitting and listening
- There's a lack of public social space (Third Spaces)

Community and Culture

- "It's a proverbial nightmare to deal with locals, especially in January through May."
- According to some in the city, there is a definite tension between locals and tourism; older demographic doesn't have spending power/willingness to spend and can be negative about the community. There's a group of people that are just generally negative and don't want change. How do they reinforce their image? West Allis could be a resource for best practices on similar issues.

Wishlist

Amenities and Activities

- Third Spaces
 - Something akin to The Wharf in Manitowoc
 - A public market (see Mequon)
- Possibly a casino
- More family-oriented activities
- Something for "tweens" and teens
- Small grocery or convenience store in the east part of the city
- Festivals, such as Lakefest or a winter festival

Marketing and Communication

- Package together some of the main draws
- Keep campaigns fresh
- The city is 11% Hmong and 9% Latino/a; make sure there is marketing to diverse groups

Notes

There's a similar phenomenon as with the business community: there are many organizations that could be marketing the City (with some of the organizations themselves overlapping), but no one seems to know what their responsibilities are. Similarly, many people assume that Visit Sheboygan should be marketing within the community and are resentful that they don't, but Visit actually can't market within 50 miles of the city, so communicating this would help the City.

Housing

Strengths

City

- Almost universally, the City is collaborative and “one of the best” to work with, including zoning, building inspection, communication and involvement within the landlord community, and they help create solutions

Community and Culture

- It's good, as well as progressive
- Parks and recreation are great
- People care about the community as a whole

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

Housing

- Big gaps in what types of housing is available, both in type and price
 - Also, there's a disconnect in what homes people are trying to get into, likely due to the limited types; ie lower income people are trying to afford homes that are too expensive, while upper income people are in homes that are too cheap because that's the stock the city has
- It is difficult to build homes outside of a certain price range within the City
 - Higher end homes are tough because of the higher taxes within City limits
 - Homes in the \$200,000 range are difficult to make a profit on
 - \$300,000 is the developers' sweet spot, but doesn't fit everyone
- Landlords don't always know when their tenants commit code violations.
- Landlords are disincentivized to make improvements to their properties because their taxes will increase and they'll find tenants anyway.

Community and Culture

- It's difficult to know how to market the City, such as with what there is to do and what amenities are available, as well as the school district (or its apparent quality) compared to suburban districts.
 - Young professionals are particularly difficult to market to
- There is a lack of diversity, celebration of diversity, and sense of belonging.
- People who are new to Sheboygan have difficulties feeling like they are part of the community.

Wishlist

Housing and City's Role in Housing

- Smaller homes being built
- A way to connect good tenants with good landlords and to hold tenants accountable
- Improvements to code enforcement programs

Community

- Childcare
- Programs to support substance abuse issues and mental health challenges

Notes

It seemed like there is a lot of operating on perceptions. For example, one participant was surprised at how many people aged 55 and older have been selling their homes to move into the higher end apartments. Additionally, someone mentioned that there may be a perception that there is “nothing happening for lower income people,” especially since the new apartments have been higher end.

There are also challenges in both the homeowner and renter markets at all price/income levels, but, based on existing interactions, it sounds like the City is on a good track to work with landlords and developers to solve them.

Families and Schools

Strengths

Community and Culture

- There is a sense of community and the ability to participate in community events; people “put things to the side” to help the community
- Businesses are collaborative, not competitive, with each other
- Neighborhood Associations are strong and active
- There is a variety of activities for adults and kids: sports leagues, interest groups, clubs, etc.

City and Amenities

- Schools get good support from City

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

City and Amenities

- There is a lack of Third Spaces, as well as upscale shopping and dining.
- Transportation; students use public transportation
- Childcare is expensive and hard to find, especially during “off hours” and for students who are parents themselves

City and Amenities

Wishlist

Community and Culture

- A public Third Space that is kid and teenager friendly
- Upscale shopping and dining, such as specialty grocery stores, clothing (including children’s clothing), and boutique-type stores
- Filling vacant spaces downtown
- Bringing additional affordable housing and housing-that-is-affordable to the market

City and Schools

- Fixing and maintaining roads (including snow)
- Taking proactive steps toward student safety, including intentional relationships and training as well as site analysis
- Streamlining housing permitting process
- Marketing the city’s affordability for remote workers and higher income people

Notes

This group agreed with what many others had previously said, but focused on the sense of community and the lack of amenities, such as upscale shopping and dining (several said that they leave regularly for these purposes, activities for teenagers, as well as activities they can do with their children, plus a lack of and/or difficulties with childcare and public transportation.

Community, Arts, and Culture

Strengths

City and Amenities

- Natural amenities such as parks and the lakefront
- Restaurants and entertainment
- Proximity to other cities and major sports
- Schools
- Sheboygan is, overall, a unique experience

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

City and Amenities

- The City doesn't leverage what it already has enough
- There is a lack of shopping (especially clothing and boutique stores) and entertainment
- Not many options for youth

Wishlist

City and Amenities

- Restaurants that are "between a dive bar and something completely high end."
- Activities for kids and teenagers where they can be left alone for a few hours; several options located close together that they can independently move between, such as a bowling alley as well as coffee or ice cream shop.
- More collaboration with Visit Sheboygan
- Stronger marketing of the community and its amenities

Notes

This group stressed that there is a lot of good already in Sheboygan, but that efforts in getting the word out could use improvement. They also echoed many other groups regarding the lack of shopping options and places for both adults and teenagers to gather.

Elevating Diverse Voices

Strengths

Diversity and Inclusion and the Social Sector

- City leaders and others are beginning to realize that Sheboygan is a diverse community and are becoming more open to “thinking and learning”
- There are a lot of good nonprofits in the city
- There are groups in the community that have a focus on change

City and Amenities

- The Library is one of the strongest City services, despite its continual funding cuts

Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges

Diversity and Inclusion

- There is still a long way to go with DEI:
 - City leadership still needs to “wake up”
 - It has taken a long time and a lot of effort to get to this point
 - The City does not value diversity and uses it as a tool

City and the Social Sector

- There is not a good clearing house for the nonprofits in the city
- City communication needs to be more and better
- City policies are outdated

Survey/ Strategic Plan Process

- To whom and how the survey was distributed
- The survey is unavailable/inaccessible to minorities

Wishlist

City and Diversity

- Hire a Diversity Officer and/or open an Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Do diversity trainings
- Improve hiring practices
- Hire experts, such as for diversity trainings and policy reviews
- The City needs to do more outreach overall

Community and Culture

- Broaden the perspectives of people in the city

Survey/ Strategic Plan Process

- A billboard advertising the outreach part of the Strategic Plan
- A Strategic Plan for Communication and Outreach

Notes

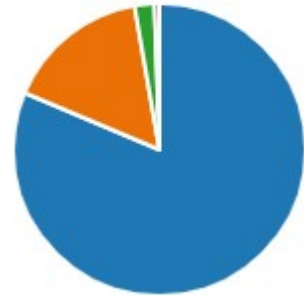
This group expressed some encouragement and much frustration with the status of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in Sheboygan. It appears that more attention by the City should be given to this issue, with potential progress achievable where the City can undertake meaningful efforts through implementing best practices, and continue to share progress and results with the community.

Resident Input Questionnaire Results

1. Where do you live?

[More Details](#)

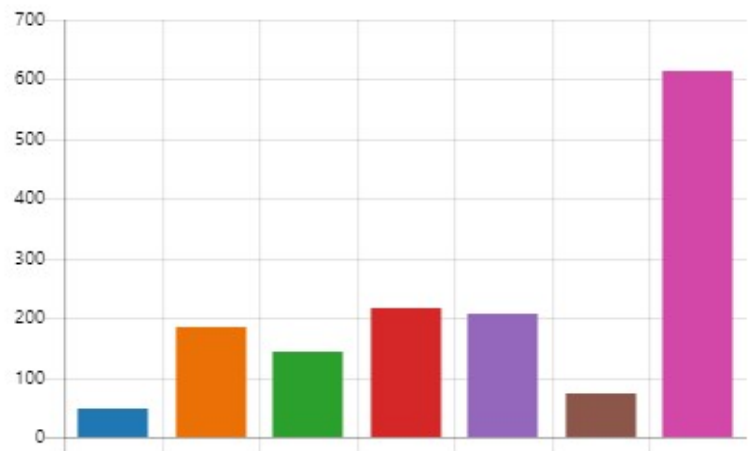
In the City of Sheboygan	1488
Outside of the City but within ...	291
Outside of Sheboygan County	40
Unsure	10



2. How long have you lived in the City?

[More Details](#)

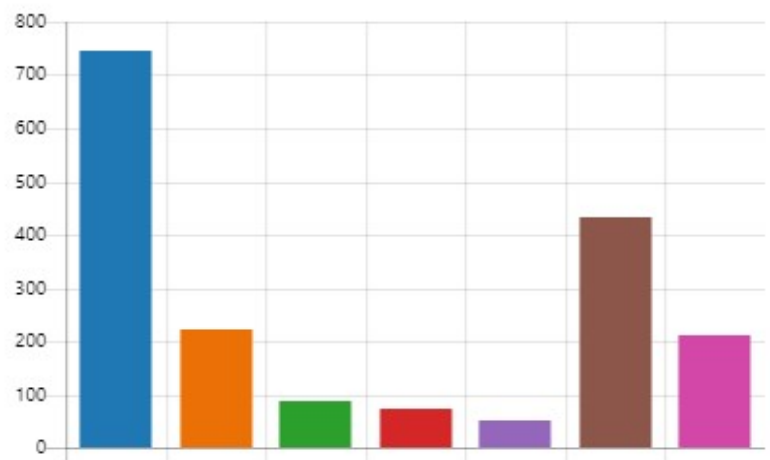
Less than one year	47
1 to 5 years	183
6 to 10 years	144
11 to 15 years	217
16 to 20 years	208
21 to 25 years	74
More than 25 years	615



3. Which of the following best describes you:

[More Details](#)

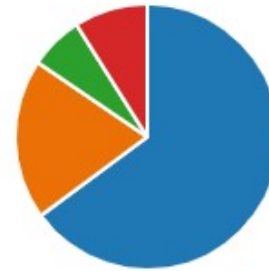
Employed full time	747
Employed part time	223
Self employed	86
Unemployed and looking for ...	74
Unemployed and not looking ...	50
Retired	434
Full time student	212



4. Where do you work, primarily?

[More Details](#)

● In the City of Sheboygan	685
● Outside of the City but within ...	206
● Outside of Sheboygan County	69
● Remotely from my Home	95

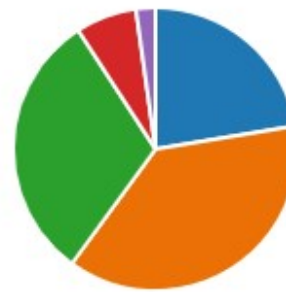


5. How much do you agree or disagree that your employment needs can be met within the City?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

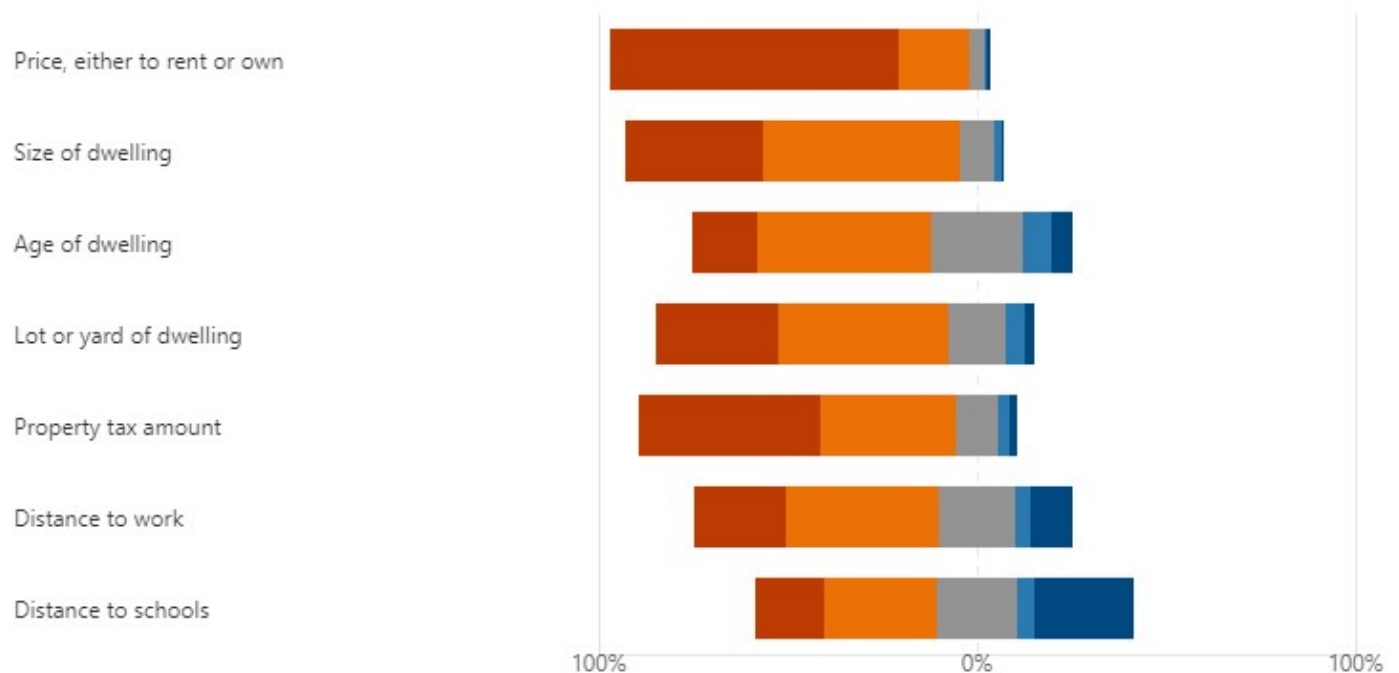
● Strongly agree	406
● Agree	683
● Neither agree nor disagree	559
● Disagree	126
● Strongly disagree	40



6. When deciding where to live, how important are each of the following **housing and location** factors to you:

[More Details](#)

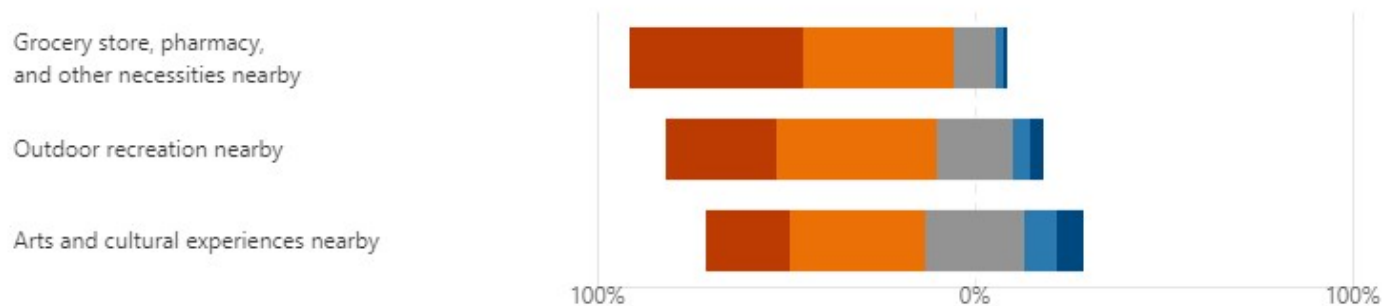
■ Very Important
 ■ Somewhat Important
 ■ Neither Important nor Unimportant
 ■ Somewhat Unimportant
 ■ Unimportant



7. When deciding where to live, how important are each of the following **shopping and recreation** factors to you:

[More Details](#)

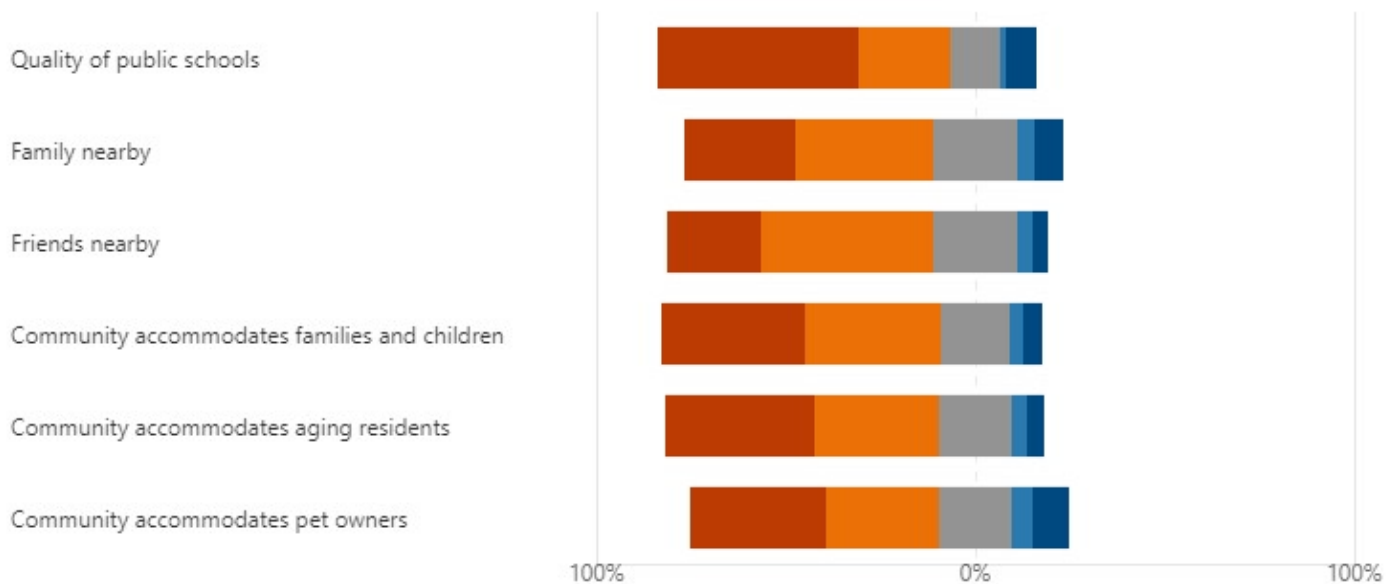
■ Very Important
 ■ Somewhat Important
 ■ Neither Important nor Unimportant
 ■ Somewhat Unimportant
 ■ Unimportant



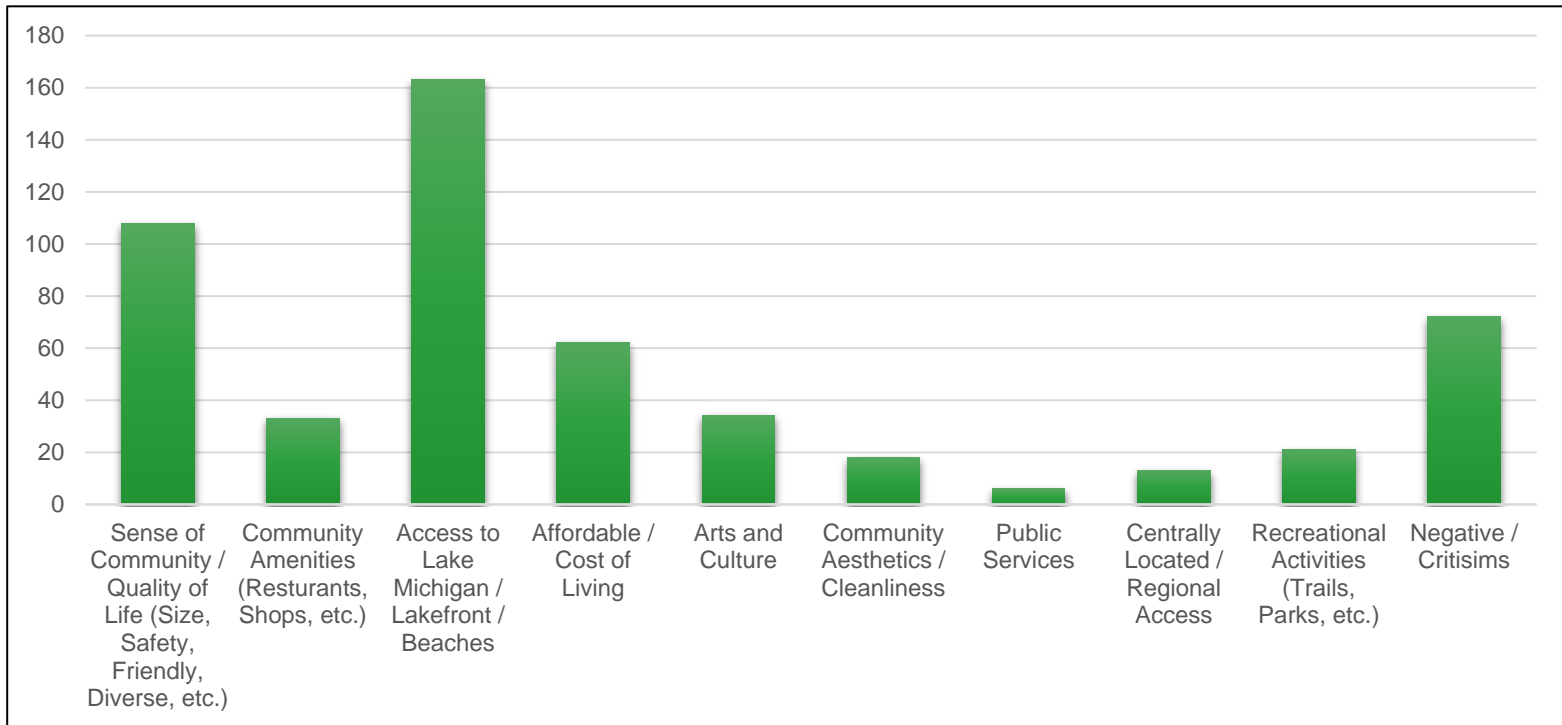
8. When deciding where to live, how important are each of the following **community** factors to you:

[More Details](#)

■ Very Important
 ■ Somewhat Important
 ■ Neither Important nor Unimportant
 ■ Somewhat Unimportant
 ■ Unimportant



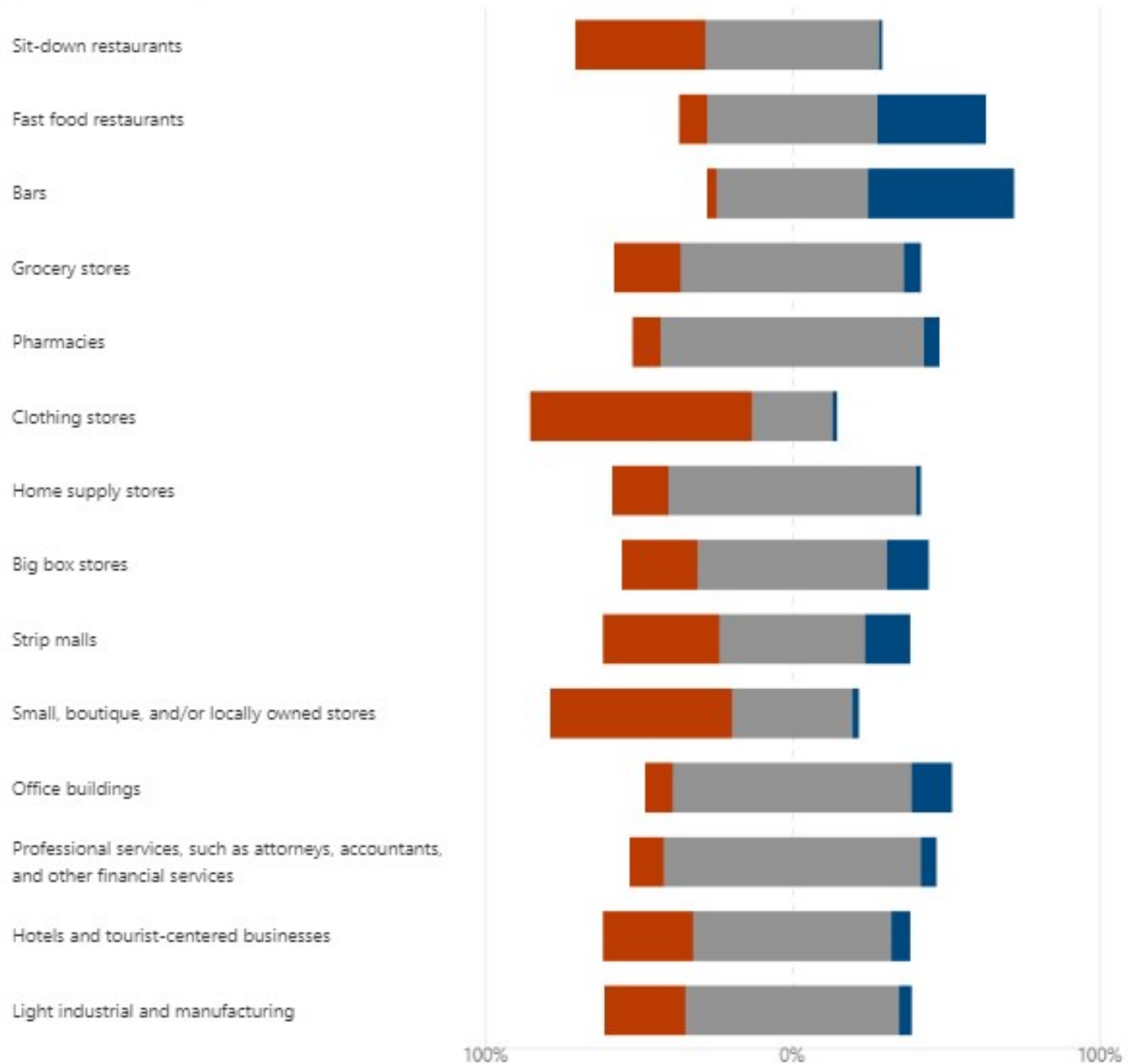
9. What makes Sheboygan attractive and distinguishable from surrounding communities (such as cost of living, available amenities, arts/culture, access to waterfront, etc.)?



10. Do you think the amount of each of the following types of businesses in the City is:

[More Details](#)

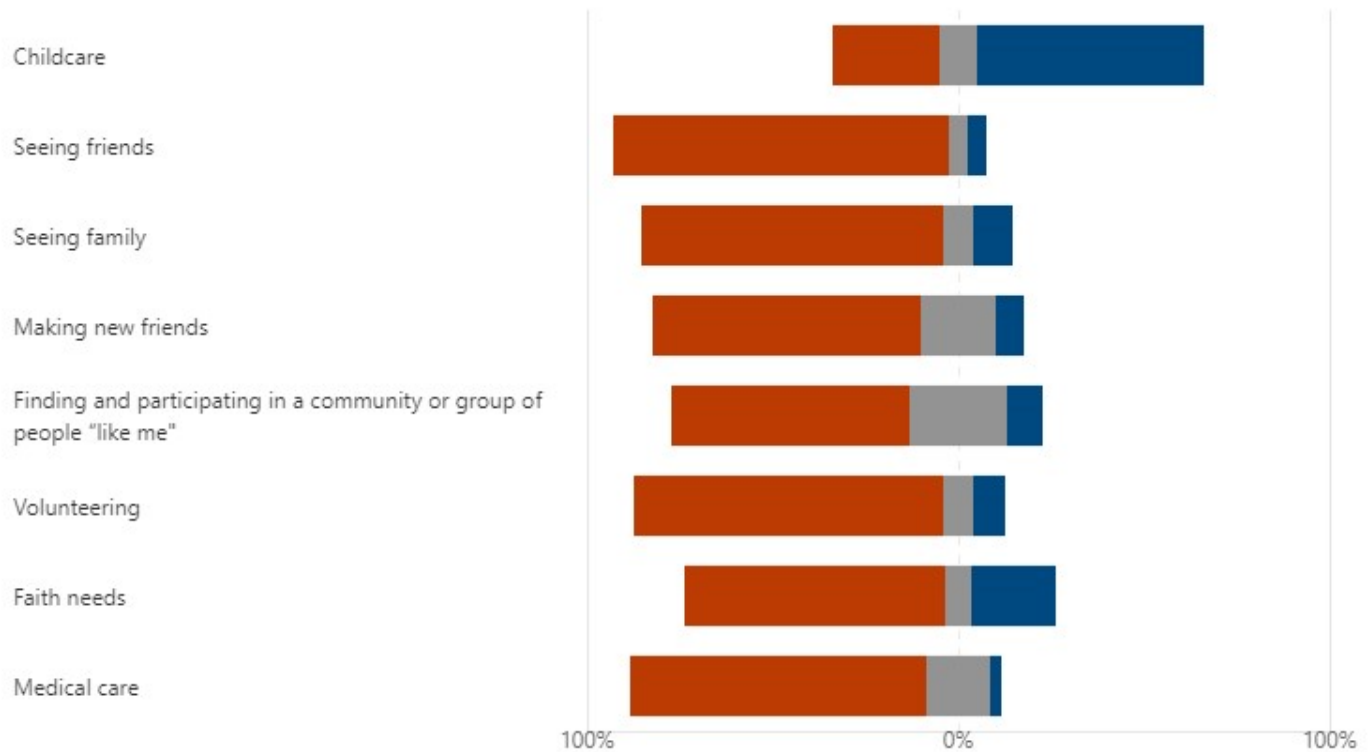
■ Not Enough ■ Just Right ■ Too Much



11. Consider your **personal, family, and social** needs. Can each of the following needs be met within the City of Sheboygan?

[More Details](#)

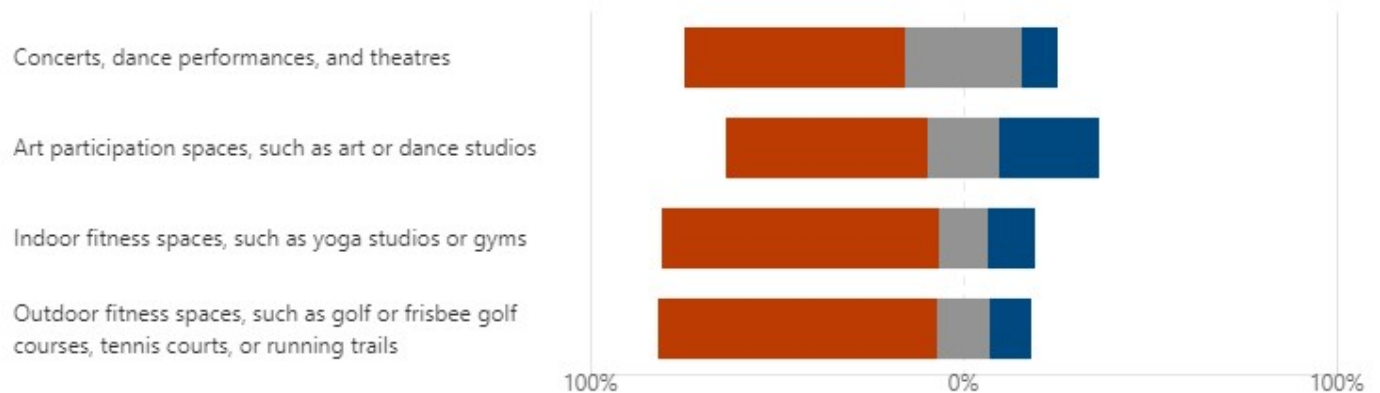
■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Applicable to Me



12. Consider your **recreational** needs. Can each of the following needs be met within the City of Sheboygan?

[More Details](#)

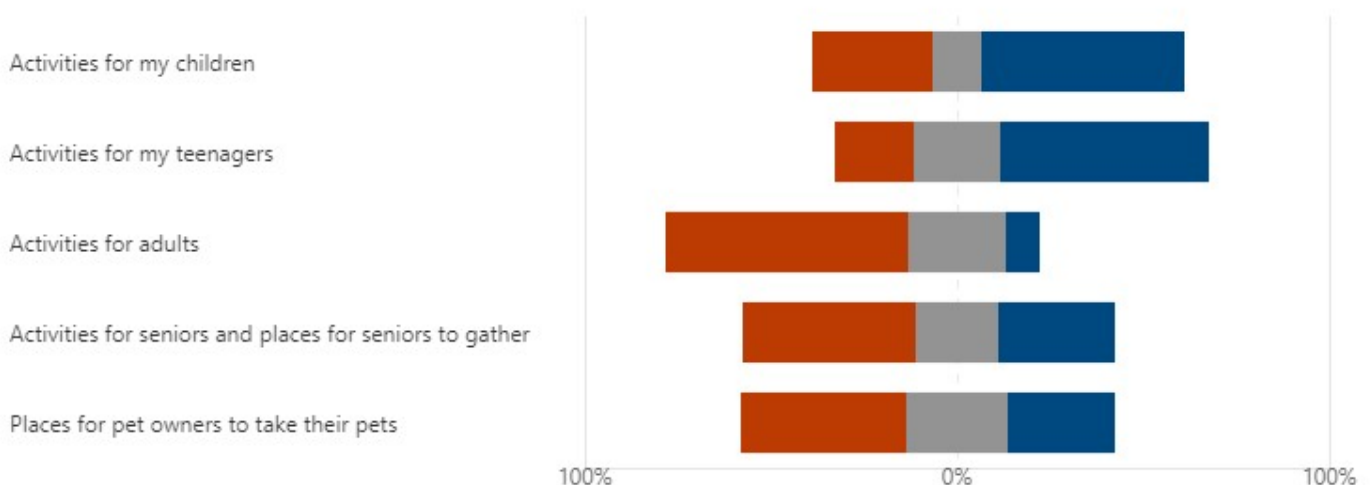
■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Applicable to Me



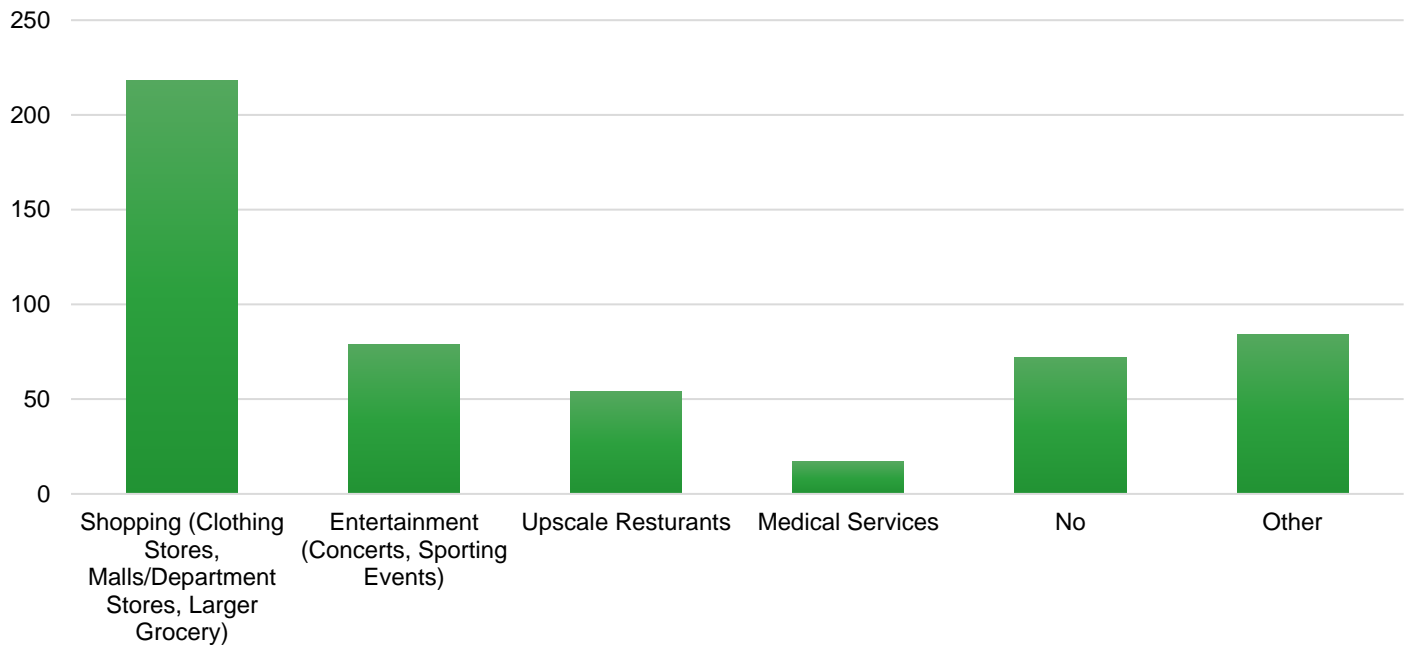
13. Consider the needs of **specific groups**. Can each of the following needs be met within the City of Sheboygan?

[More Details](#)

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Applicable to Me

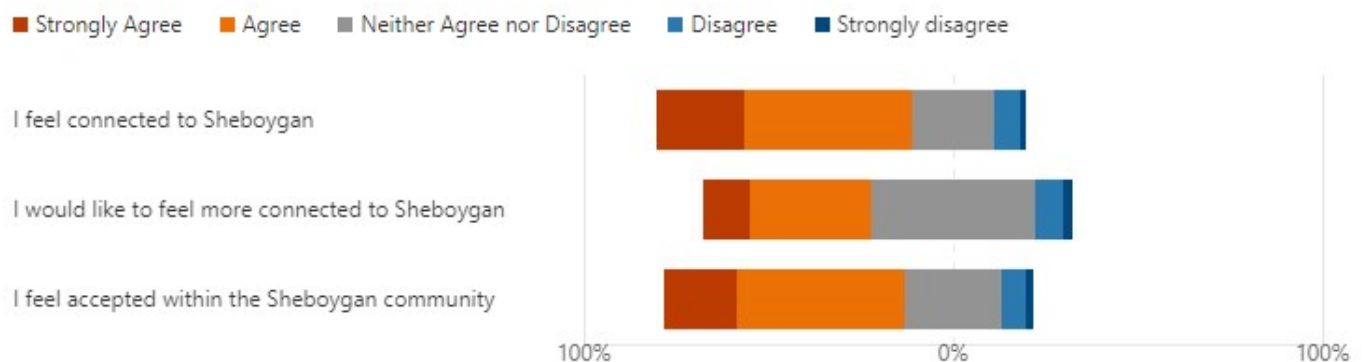


14. Is there anything that you regularly leave Sheboygan to find? If so, what?



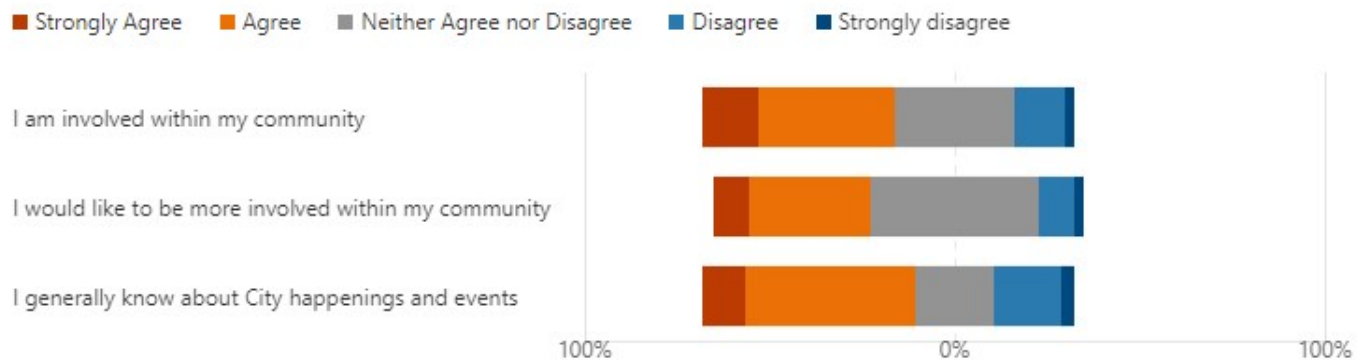
15. Think about your **connectedness** in and to Sheboygan. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

[More Details](#)



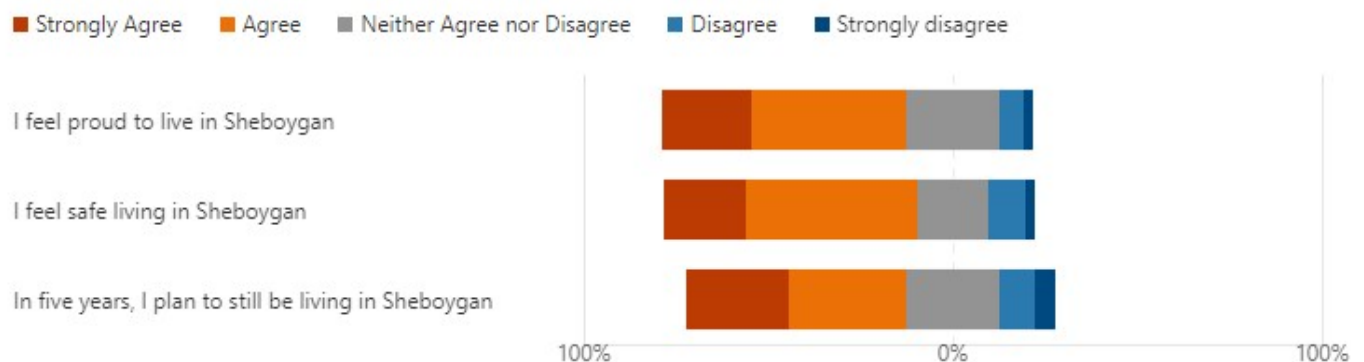
16. Think about your **involvement** in Sheboygan, both with the City and City-sponsored events as well as with non-City organizations, programs, and events. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

[More Details](#)



17. Think about **life in general** in Sheboygan. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

[More Details](#)



18. Would you like to add any comments about your responses to any of these questions?

There were 460 responses to this question and, from them, several major themes emerged, which are explored below. Please note that many responses contained comments on multiple themes, which are reflected in some of the answer counts in the theme sections below. Please note that the themes do not capture all thoughts or answers, only a summary of those that were entered as open responses to this question.

Community Pride and Feel



Selected responses:

- Born and raised in Sheboygan, and proud to call it home. One of the reasons I came back here to work after college from a big city, I appreciate the 'pace' of this area.
- I think Sheboygan is a gem that needs just a little polishing. I am impressed with some of the new city leaders and feel optimistic that things are moving in the right direction.
- The city really is a great place to live and grow up in but our policy making is turning this community in to a little Milwaukee high crime and the police look the other direction on crime
- I used to be patriotically Sheboyganite, but not as much anymore. Level of cleanliness and care in the visible community dropped, and roads are still bad, despite more spending, wheel tax, shared sales tax, etc. Not happy about becoming an average city, when we were clean, safe and parklike!
- The streets in Sheboygan have become litter boxes. Litter, litter everywhere. Bring back some garbage cans on busy city corners.

Activities and Entertainment (A&E)

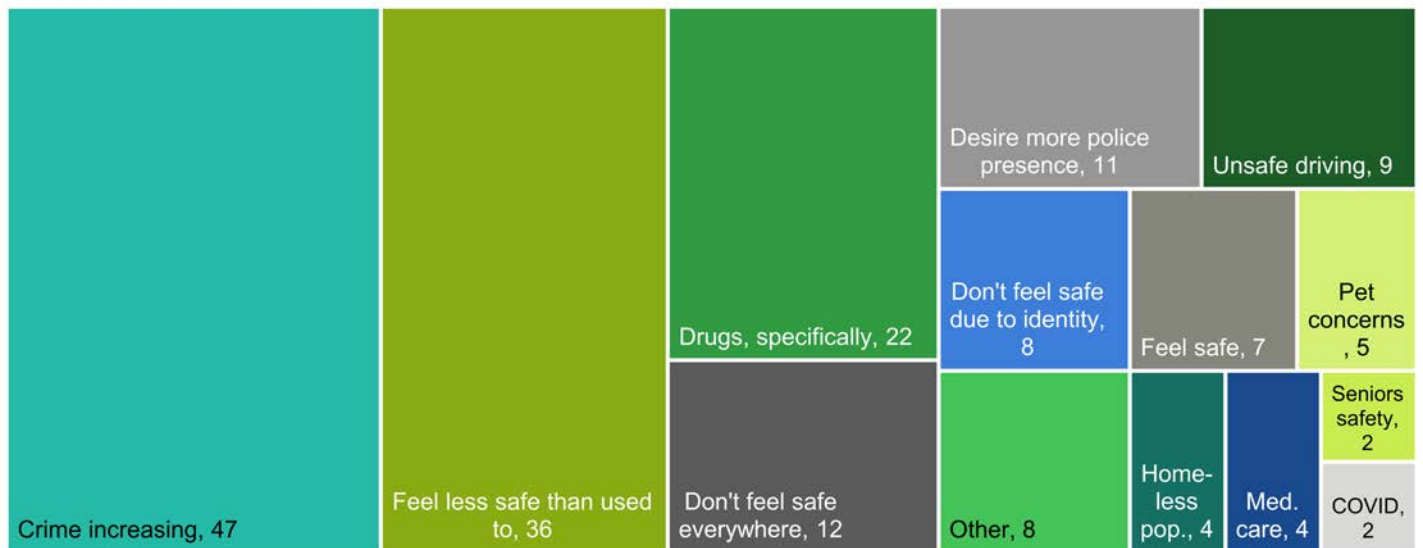


Selected responses:

- It would be nice to have more cultural connectedness for the Spanish speaking community, or events that all in the community can attend and learn about while this group shares their experiences and culture. Perhaps a committee of a sort of local leadership and outreach individuals (e.g. community health workers, churches, business owners, restaurant owners, etc.).
- I enjoy our local arts scene and would love to see it expanded.
- There is a lot of potential in Sheboygan that you really see in the summer when the boardwalk/beach area is active and thriving. People don't normally think about Sheboygan outside of Sheboygan, it seems, but there is a lot of great and fun to be had here. Being by the waterfront is a huge plus. I wish the boardwalk area would take off more, have more bars and restaurants around the area (like in the Pier 51) building that attracts people towards the best area in the city.
- I think we should have more activities for teens because if you think about it, there's basically only things [for] adults and small children, unless you go to the beach or something.
- Sheboygan needs to have more activities for seniors.
- I'm embarrassed about how Sheboygan is not up to do with merchandising / shopping opportunities. This is 2022 and Sheboygan looks like it is still trapped in the 90s!
- The city does not have much to offer. We need more restaurants, a place for people to go, dance and listen to good music. We need a thriving downtown. We need more youth centers and centers for the elderly.

Safety

Please note that "Pet concerns" includes both a lack of safe places to take your own pet and concerns over off leash dogs. "Other" includes: lack of lighting, lack of parking enforcement, trafficking, bicycle safety, concerns over police harassment



Selected responses:

- While I currently feel "safe" in Sheboygan, I don't feel as safe as I did 5 years ago. Crime seems to be ticking up, and traffic safety issues are being largely ignored by the city.
- Crime appears to be on the rise. I don't feel safe at night any longer, which pushed me out of the city.
- Safety is relative. There is a lot more crime than meets the eye. We live in a great neighborhood on the lake, yet we have car break ins and random theft regularly.
- I feel safe living in Sheboygan due to our neighborhood. Further, I know which parts of Sheboygan not to hang around in -- especially after dark.
- Lots of drug activity happening in plain [sight]
- There are areas of town I would access more frequently if they felt safer. Crime and homelessness has increased. I don't always feel comfortable going to the Library and I really enjoy going and browsing.
- Too much reckless driving, Sheboygan is starting to feel a bit like Milwaukee.
- Police need to be seen around more. Most days you do not see a policeman/woman out at all
- As an active member in the community I myself feel comfortable living in Sheboygan, but I feel my 17 year old mixed race son does not always feel the same.
- Racism and LGBT+ phobia is still going strong in too many places. As a transgender man, I want to move out for safety.
- The only reason I do not feel 100% safe in this community as I had my Pride flag ripped from my house and stolen. Homophobia and any other phobia should not be tolerated.
- Sheboygan does not feel like a safe place for a young [woman] like me.
- Sometimes I feel safe, sometimes - I feel judged in places where I should feel safe. My partner was misgendered at a hospital.

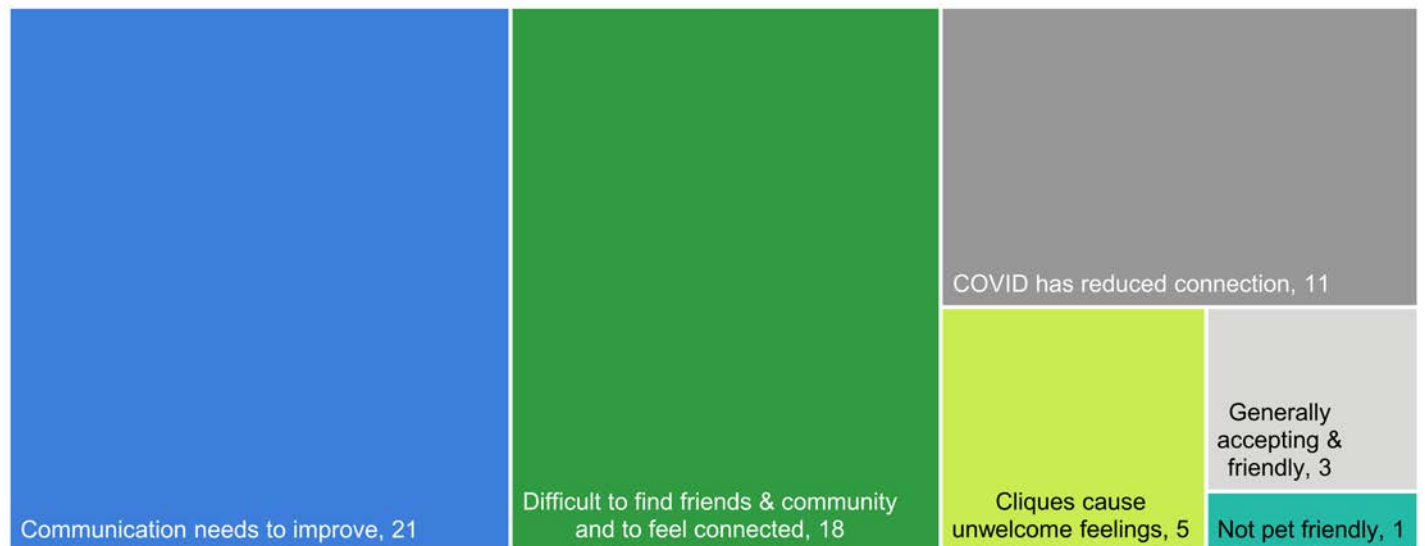
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging



Selected responses:

- Need handicap parking downtown, at South pier, accessible cross ramp sidewalks
- While I think the City does a good job at snow removal, it seems that the quality differs from driver to driver of the snow plows. That leads to seniors having to pay for snow removal services at outrageous rates or risking their health doing their own snow removal. Not everyone has an able-bodied friend or relative who can pick up that slack.
- Senior center has not been a priority despite all the talk about it.
- Sheboygan seems to put public transportation via buses and taxi's on the lower end of importance. We are made to feel like lower class citizens [by] this city.
- The poor treatment of working-class professionals and the lack of leadership and accountability at the municipal and county levels makes it extremely unlikely that I would remain in Sheboygan long term.
- Work on diversity, make sure a variety of voices are represented at the table when making decisions. Make sure minorities, women, elderly, lgbtq have a voice.
- Sheboygan doesn't feel diverse enough and too many people are not supportive of marginalized communities
- The city is becoming much more diverse, which is a wonderful thing.
- Police force is incredibly biased towards dealings with people of color and I would like more community outreach involved with them getting more training so they don't harass my fellow community members
- The city government is self-serving and only gives lip service to diversity measures

Connection



Selected responses:

- I find out what is happening in Sheboygan with a combination of information from Press, free newspapers, notices on board at Mead, and events with groups to which I have a membership. I don't "do" FB, so maybe I miss info there, but I wish there was a source that is responsible for all events.
- Local news coverage is so poor now with the Sheb Press essentially out of business. I have little idea what the city is doing and no clue about the schools and sports teams.
- A people friendly city
- I have lived here for 5 years and have made friends and gotten involved in the community. I am comfortable here. I do think that people are not accepting of people who were not born and raised here. and that it takes a long time to find friends. Most of the people I am friends with are transplants.
- I've lived in Sheboygan (City) for 16 years and still feel like an outsider at times. It took a long time to "fit in"
- We're still really new to town. COVID precautions on our part have limited our outreach into the community. We've been busy unpacking and watching grandkids. Cool weather has also limited our outdoor time to meet others.
- Covid restrictions placed a hardship on most people feeling connected. For the last several years the Senior Center got me involved in my community and active but it is still closed and many of us miss it immensely.
- It's hard to find a place to meet single people other than bars.

Staying Here



Selected responses:

- I am a life long Sheboyganite. It will probably take a lot to uproot me.
- I plan to stay here, but I don't think our kids will. There's not a lot of opportunities for them to stay outside of manufacturing jobs or entrepreneurship.
- Sheboygan is a great place to live. Raised my children and wouldn't consider leaving
- In 5 yrs moving out of sheboygan for senior living
- Some day when we retire we always thought we would remain in Sheboygan. Now with multiple apartment complexes going up, we are seriously considering moving to an area community when we retire.
- Sheboygan has been getting unsafe I don't go away [at] night. In five years we will be living close to our family in Lodi. I was born and raised here but when the kids grew up and received their degrees in engineering they could not find work here so they moved on and started a new life and now we will do the same because family is so very important.
- I plan to move to a different city to be closer to my grandson. It's not easy for me to leave.
- Sheboygan is no longer the safe city people seem to think it is. Sheboygan also no longer supports residential property owners, we have had 3 neighbors move out of the city in the last 7 years, we plan on moving out within the next 5 years. Sad that many people we know have the same feelings about life in Sheboygan.
- It is likely we will move out of the city and into a better school district as our children approach school age.
- Born in Sheboygan. Lived elsewhere for 10 years. Returned to Sheboygan.
 - *Note: This is an example of a "boomerang resident"*

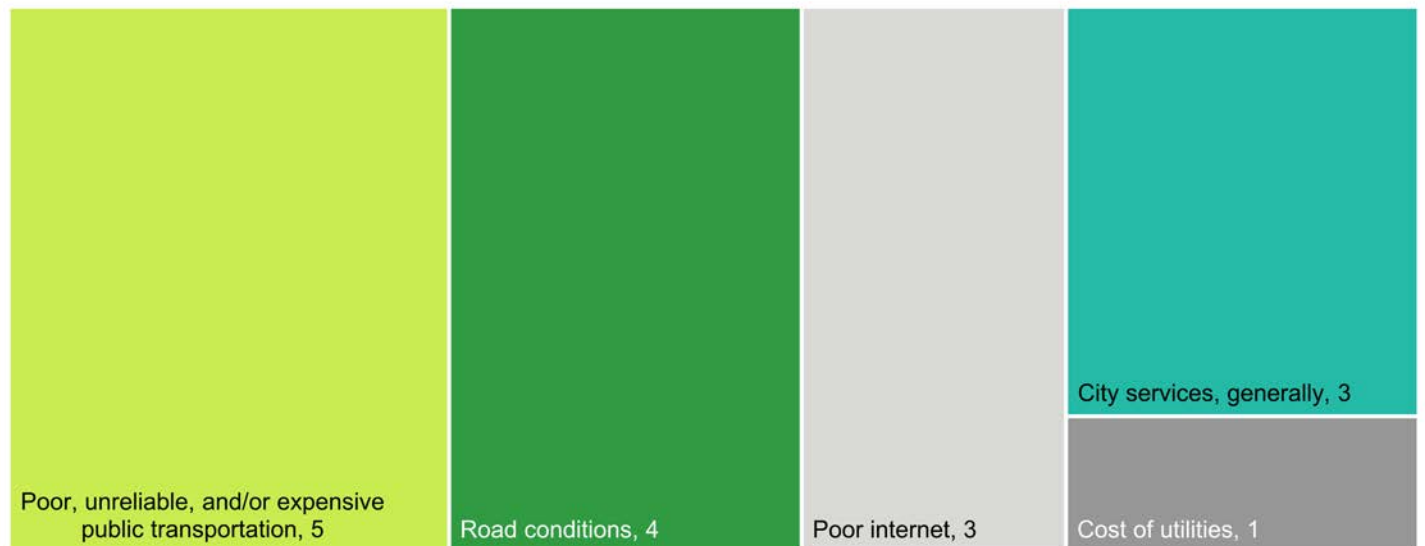
Housing



Selected responses:

- More affordable single-family housing would benefit everyone in the city
- Stop trying to be Kohler, stop building on the waterfront
- We picked Sheboygan over Port Washington. I feel like Sheboygan really needs to develop their lakefront area similar to the route Port Washington is taking. Increased condos, apartments, and brewery/restaurants filling the empty lots on the river/ lakefront area would make the city more filled out and increase activity downtown.
- I feel like if Sheboygan keeps getting more and more expensive apartments I won't be able to afford to live here. My rent has already gone up a significant amount
- STOP BUILDING SO [MANY] DARN APARTMENT/CONDOS! We need more low/medium cost housing. Help homeowners/and people who own rentals to be able to fix/update their properties.
- I'd feel more proud about Sheboygan if you could get rid of the many slum landlords and provide affordable housing for working-class individuals and families.
- There seems to be newer apt. buildings for lower income, and upper income, but newer apt. building rental for middle class is unaffordable.
- Apartments for seniors, like myself, are way to expensive, especially with a fixed income, like myself. We need apartments that are affordable. I can't afford 1,000 dollars for an apartment... there are alot of seniors that I talked to agree...

Utilities and Services



Selected responses:

- I do not drive. Taxi's in Sheboygan are unsafe and expensive. The bus hours are far too short and unpredictable. Routes and schedules change without notice. Buses are too expensive hard to get passes etc.
- Please give us a decent bus system that runs so people have an ability to work any shift without worrying how they are going to get there or get home. Also an ability to get to church on saturday or sunday and more service to kohler and sheboygan falls
- Sheboygan's biggest draw used to be cheap living with decent amenities. The city has since fallen behind on this. Internet choices are a great place to look at the stagnant ways of Sheboygan. Push for fiber to the home, get it run through neighborhoods, and watch the city flourish. AT&T is dragging this city down.
- I wish our roads were better. This gives a bad impression of Sheboygan when people come here.

Schools



Selected responses:

- Highly rated education and low crime are very important to me, and I don't find that in Sheboygan unfortunately. There are plenty of shops/grocery and other, but those aren't daily things that are important like schooling
- Concerned about what is being taught in our schools.
- Us still living here will depend on if the schools are a good fit for our kids. If they are we're more likely to stay. If not we'll move because there isn't anything else here for us.
- I think the safety inside our schools should be improved, especially at the high school level. Apparently drug use is commonplace and fights are frequent.

Young Professionals and Young Families



Selected responses:

- There aren't many employers for college educated young professionals, especially if you don't want to work in manufacturing.
- Sheboygan is a very nice City that has many offerings for families....maybe a little more challenging to attract 20 to 30 years old's to Sheboygan. However, those 20 to 30 year old's often times find their way back as they become older and realize what Sheboygan does offer.
- I am a stage in my life where I have no solid commitments (I don't own a home, I'm not married, and I don't have kids yet) so it wouldn't be as difficult to leave the community. However, I do love a lot of things about Sheboygan. I mainly wish there was more opportunity to meet and hang out with 25-35 year old people.
- The Shaw park was one of the best things for my family. More child care and activities places for all ages would be great.

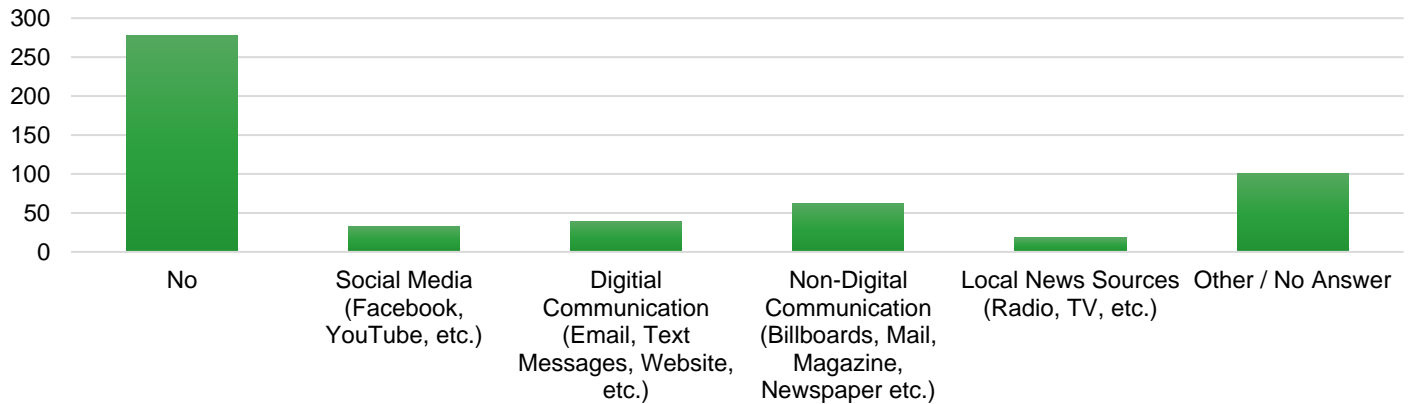
Taxes



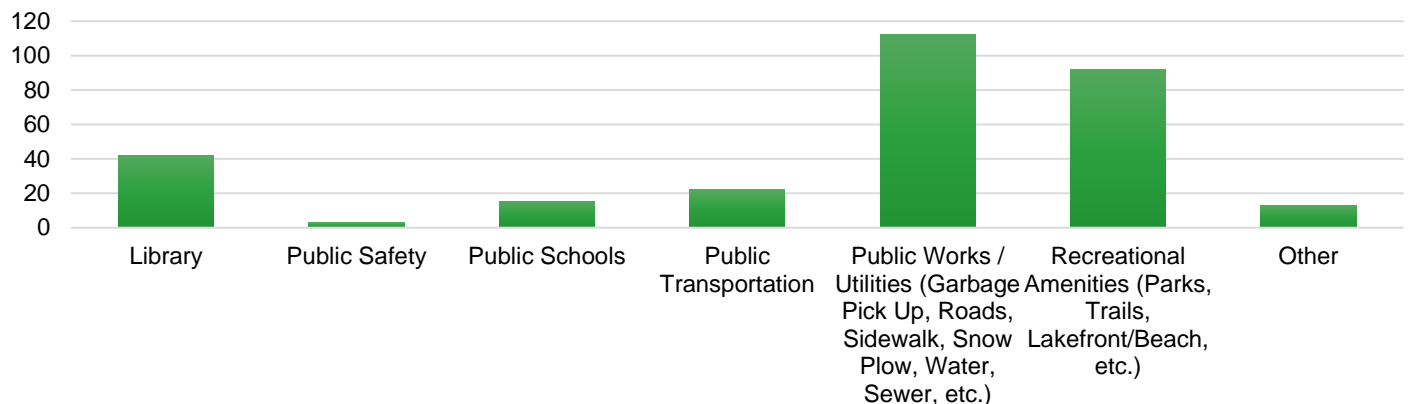
Selected responses:

- Crime is on the rise in this community, and it is very discouraging. Taxes are reasonable here, but I would agree to additional taxes to improve crime management (shootings, burglary, DRUGS, DRUGS. DRUGS).
- The cost of my City property taxes is unreasonably high in comparison to other communities and properties much nicer and larger than mine.

19. The City currently uses several methods to communicate with residents, such as through its website, social media, and the Sheboygan Insider. In addition to these methods, are there any communication methods that you would use that the City is not currently using?



20. What City services do you use the most?



21. Are there any services that you wish the City provided? If so, what are they?

