

The background of the slide is a photograph of a community meeting. Several people are standing and looking at informational displays. A large orange diagonal overlay covers the left and top portions of the image. The text 'PART 2:' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the orange background.

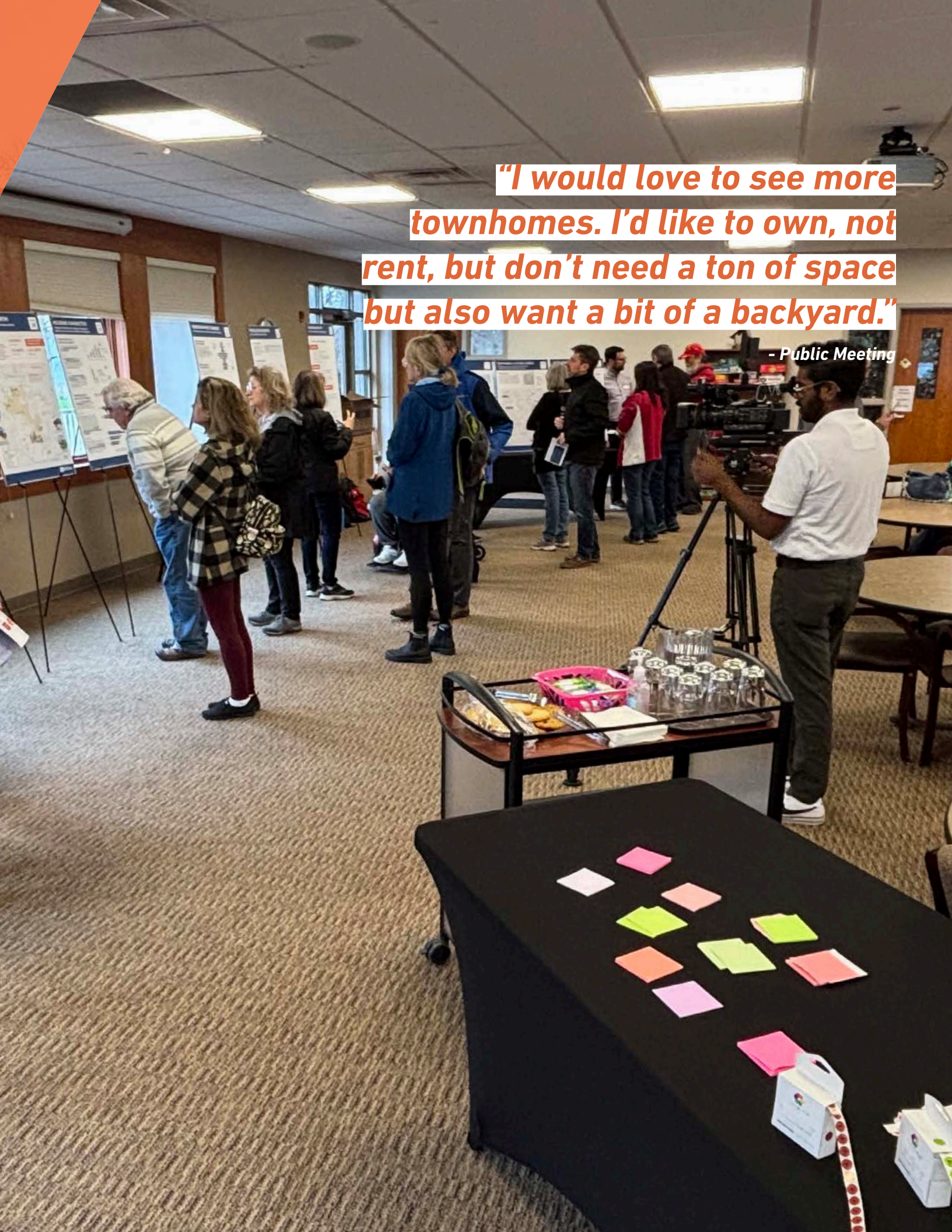
# PART 2:

# COMMUNITY

# VOICES

***"I would love to see more townhomes. I'd like to own, not rent, but don't need a ton of space but also want a bit of a backyard."***

**- Public Meeting**



# WHAT WE HEARD

## Why is Community Engagement so important?

*Envision Verona is ultimately an actionable vision that reflects the needs, desires, and concerns of the City's residents, visitors, employees, and businesses. This is what it's all about!*

The Envision Verona process was structured around two key phases of engagement. The first "Listen and Learn" phase took place from January to May of 2025, and centered on understanding the current state of the city, key themes and perspectives, and assets, issues, and opportunities. The second "Reveal and Refine" phase will take place in fall 2025 and will garner feedback on the proposed recommendations in the Draft Comprehensive Plan.

In the "Listen and Learn" phase, the planning team engaged both the community and key stakeholders.

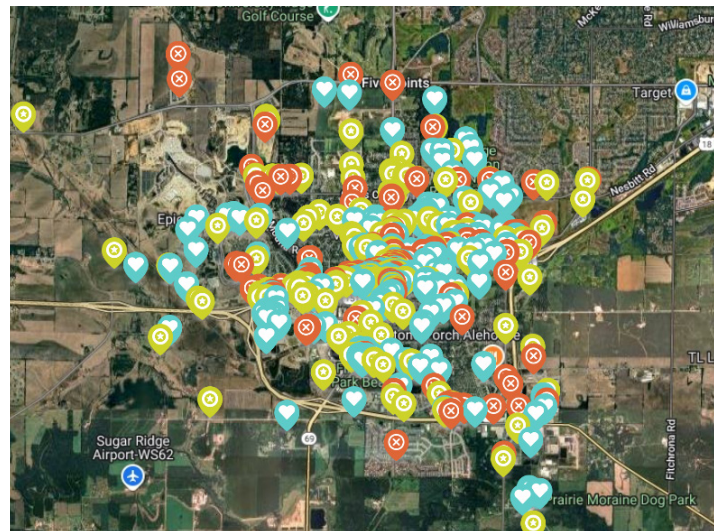
## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community was engaged in two primary ways:

- + Online, through the Envision Verona Website. The website included a long-form survey, an online mapping activity, and a general forum for comments. Paper surveys were also distributed at key locations and at public meetings.
- + In-person, at one of two community events held on April 22, 2025. An 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. public open house was held at the Verona Senior Center and a 6-8 p.m. open house was held at Verona Public Library. Events were advertised through social media, newsletters, and flyers.



Participants at the Public Open House at the Verona Senior Center.



A screenshot of the online webmap. Participants were asked to pin community assets, barriers, and opportunities.

# AT A GLANCE



**2** PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES  
**90** PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDEES\*

\*Count includes only individuals who elected to sign in. Additional people were in attendance.

**589** PINS FROM THE WEBMAP AND IN-PERSON MAP  
**1078** POST-IT COMMENTS  
**758** SURVEYS COMPLETED



## AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS

## AN AUDIT OF CITYWIDE ELEMENTS

### Live/Work Status

**32%** LIVE & WORK IN VERONA  
**58%** JUST LIVE IN VERONA  
**5%** JUST WORK IN VERONA

### Age

■ **1% UNDER 18**  
■ **2% 18-24**  
■ **13% 25-34**  
■ **28% 35-44**  
■ **25% 45-54**  
■ **12% 55-64**  
■ **13% 65-74**  
■ **5% 75 OR OLDER**

### ...VIEWED VERY POSITIVE

1. Community Services (Fire, Police, Etc...)
2. Local & Regional Trails
3. Schools & Education
4. Parks & Recreation Amenities

### ...VIEWED MOSTLY POSITIVE

5. Appearance of Public Spaces & Streets
6. Walkability, Sidewalks, & Bike Paths
7. City Government Accessibility & Transparency
8. Grocery, Shopping & Retail Options

### ...WITH MIXED TO NEGATIVE REVIEWS

9. Accessibility & Access
10. Variety of Small Businesses
11. Architectural Character & Building Design
12. Roadways & Traffic
13. Housing Availability & Variety

# COMMUNITY THEMES

The following summary includes all community feedback provided through the online webmap, online survey, online post-it board, and the first two public events on April 22, 2025. Comments were reviewed, sorted into topics, and ultimately aggregated into the dominant themes that have emerged. These 6 themes include:

- + Transportation & Mobility
- + Parks, Recreation & Community Spaces
- + Local Businesses & Downtown
- + Housing & Development
- + Community Character & Identity
- + Environment & Sustainability

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

**Traffic, Traffic, Traffic:** While there is a consensus that residents are frustrated by downtown traffic, there are differing ideas surrounding solutions. Common ideas include removing street parking to increase numbers of lanes, providing alternate routes around the Downtown, or increasing emphasis on alternative transportation options to alleviate the number of cars.

**Enthusiasm for Public Transit:** A common theme across different user groups (seniors, Epic Systems Corporation employees, businesses) includes increasing public transit options and frequency. Suggestions include park-and-ride facilities (e.g. “[Major Employers] should have a park & ride for workers. Less traffic in town!”), more bus routes, and adjusted schedules (such as off-peak buses for school and work commutes).

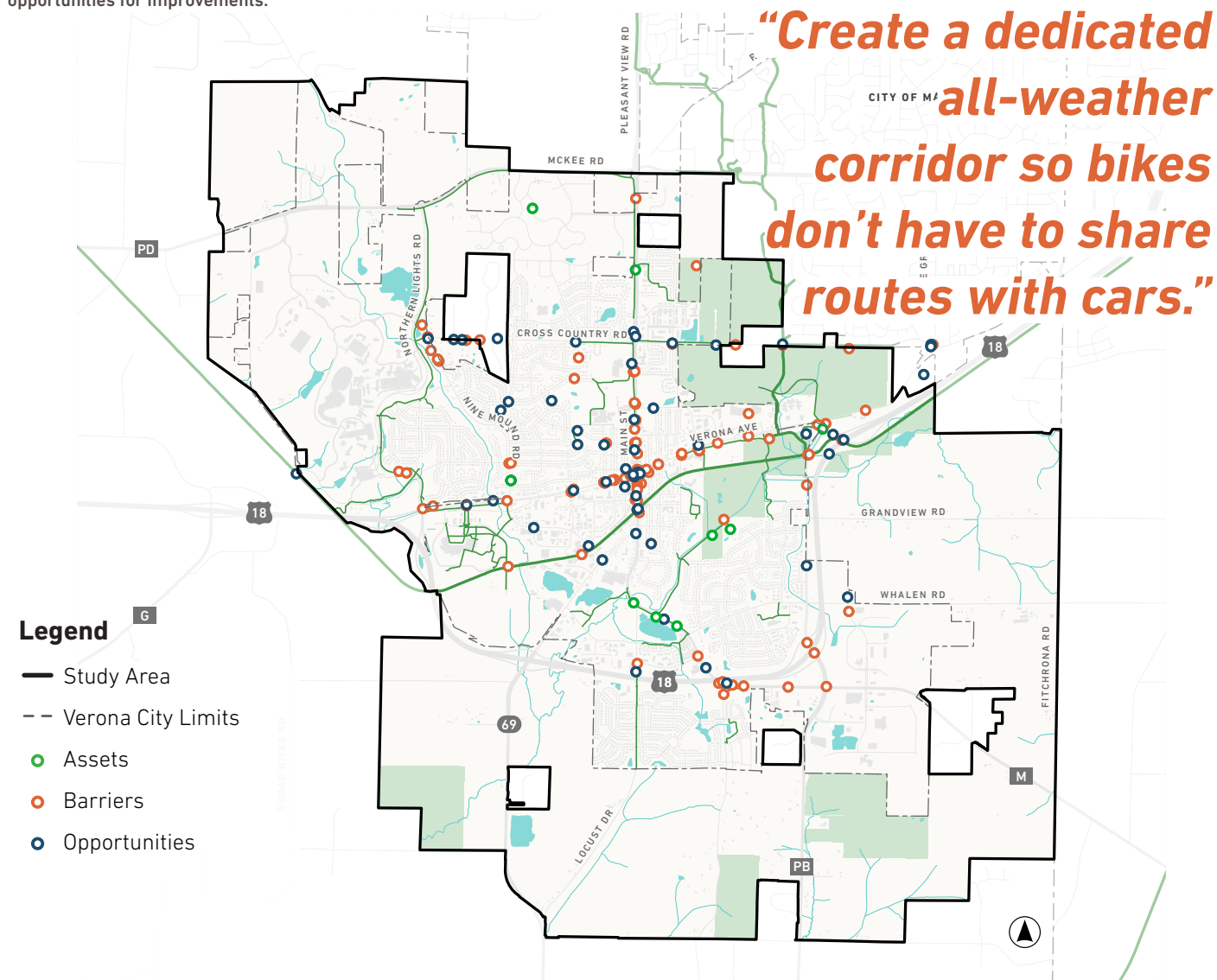
**Bike & Pedestrian:** After traffic, the most discussed topic was bike and pedestrian safety and access. Many respondents flagged the need for safety crossings through Downtown, and the need for expanded sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails that connect neighborhoods and destinations. A common theme was the desire to comfortably walk or bike to the great destinations that Verona has to offer, including the library, parks, and schools.

**Traffic-Calming & Street Design:** Traffic calming was frequently discussed, both for major intersections and minor corridors. For major intersections and corridors, ideas include roundabouts and better signal timing. Traffic compliance was also noted as a major issue, with several respondents flagging the need for increased enforcement and accountability: “Ticket people who run red lights... way too many people running red lights.” On smaller streets especially near parks and schools, traffic calming measures, speed humps, road diets, and narrower lanes were recommended to slow cars.

**Alternative Traffic Routes:** Many respondents suggest rerouting traffic around the city center as opposed to widening roads, to alleviate traffic and preserve the Downtown character. As one comment notes about Verona Avenue: “Move traffic around Verona instead of looking to expand the size... How can we have a small town feel with 4 lanes?”

**“Less traffic, stop lights and stop signs! Can’t get anywhere.”**

- Online Survey



#### Rate your level of agreement on the statements about transportation. Verona needs...

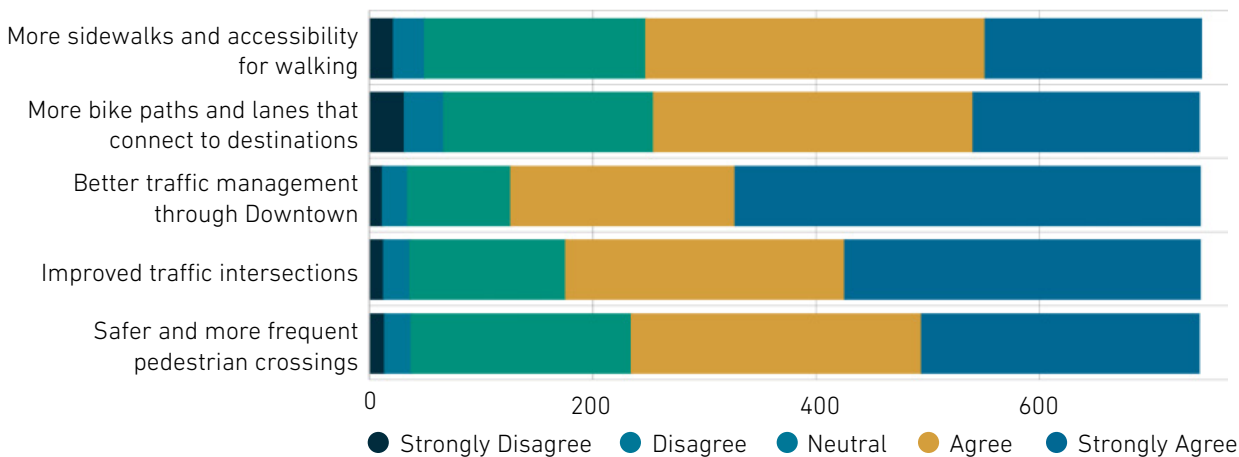


Figure 4: Survey, Level of Agreement - Transportation

## PARKS, RECREATION & COMMUNITY

**Love Parks & Trails, Want More:** Many comments express a desire for more parks and improved trail connectivity. For instance: “I [would] like to see more parks in Verona.” Respondents praise existing trails but want extensions (e.g. to the Nature Center) and new paths: “Extend path to connect to Nature Center... Also add a signalized crossing.”

**Community Facilities:** There is demand for more community hubs and events. Existing facilities such as the Library and Senior Center are highly regarded, with common comments that the Senior Center requires more space. Several mention the need for a community center or additional shared spaces.

**Recreation Amenities:** Suggestions include an outdoor pool, skating rink, and fitness stations (porta-potties). One comment notes “More access to new skating rink in new Century Park. Addition of an outdoor fitness trail for all...”. Others request practical additions like restrooms at parks and better lighting along trails, at playgrounds, and pickleball courts.

**Farmers Markets & Events:** The farmers market is highlighted as a valued community public space. People want more vendors, longer hours, and even year-round markets (one said “Year round farmers markets for local organic growers”). Regular events (music, art festivals) in parks are also popular ideas for bringing people together and are seen as vital to quality life and the character of the City of Verona.

## LOCAL BUSINESSES & DOWNTOWN

**Walkable & Unique Downtown Core:** The community strongly supports a density of independent restaurants and shops downtown. Many cite other small towns (e.g. Mt. Horeb, Mineral Point, Middleton, Sun Prairie) as models for vibrant main streets: “Paoli & Mt Horeb & Mineral Point as models – unique restaurants, music, shops, festivals. Can’t we aspire?”

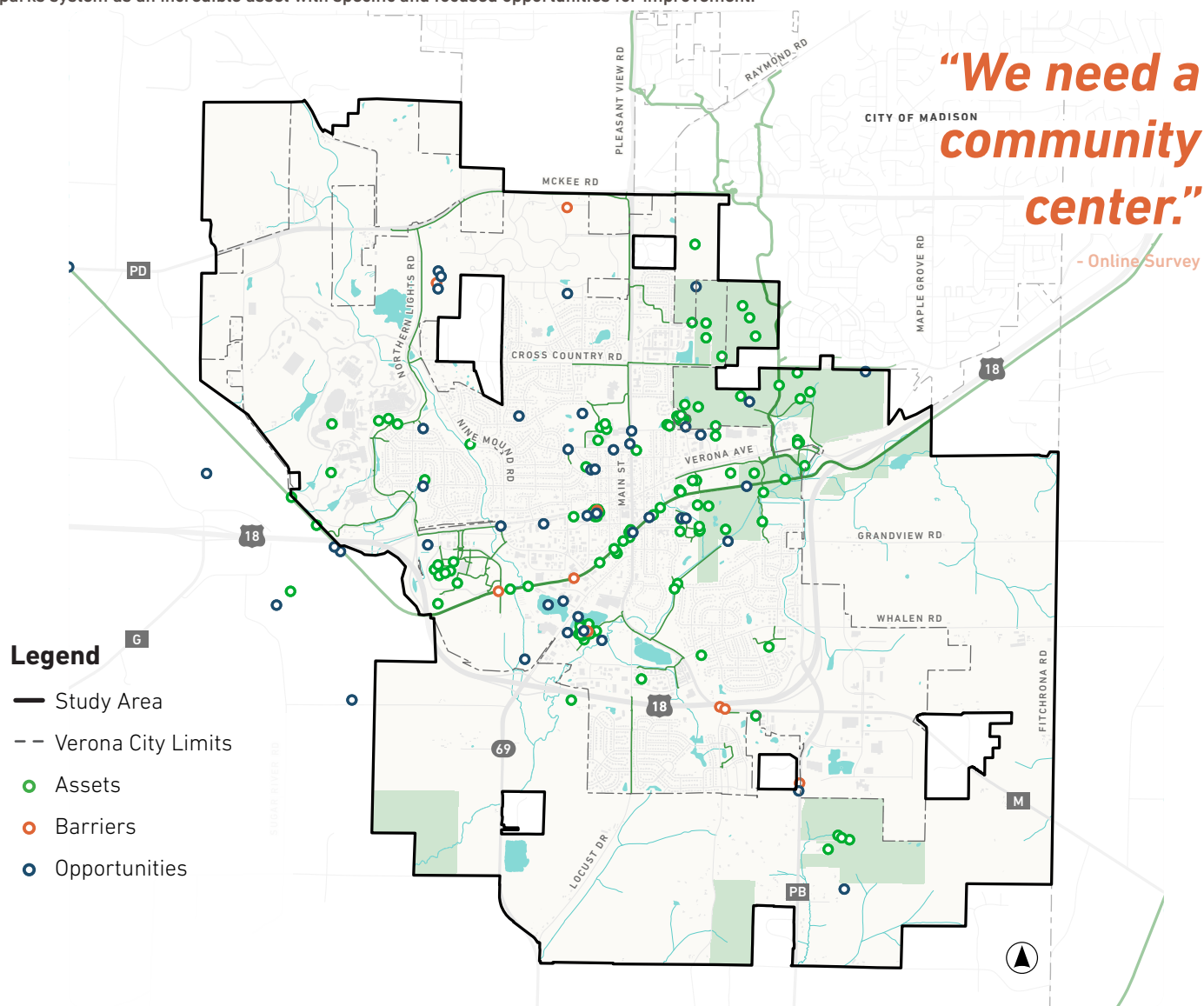
**Concerns About Fast Food:** Many comments explicitly request fewer fast-food franchises. For example: “Don’t permit more fast food places. [They] are bad for people & increase [health issues].” Respondents feel large chains harm community character.

**Support for Small Businesses:** Respondents love the existing local businesses and want to see more. In addition to the desire to attract more small businesses, additional comments suggested incentives for local business improvements (“Encourage/incentive local businesses to fix up/maintain their buildings.”) and “buy local” campaigns. Additional ideas include public funding for young entrepreneurs to nurture homegrown businesses.

***“Paoli & Mt Horeb & Mineral Point as models – unique restaurants, music, shops, festivals. Can’t we aspire?”***

- Online Survey

Map 12: Community Mapping - Parks, Recreation & Community - Map shows that the community views its parks system as an incredible asset with specific and focused opportunities for improvement.



Over the next 10 years, what do you want the city to prioritize improvements in the most?

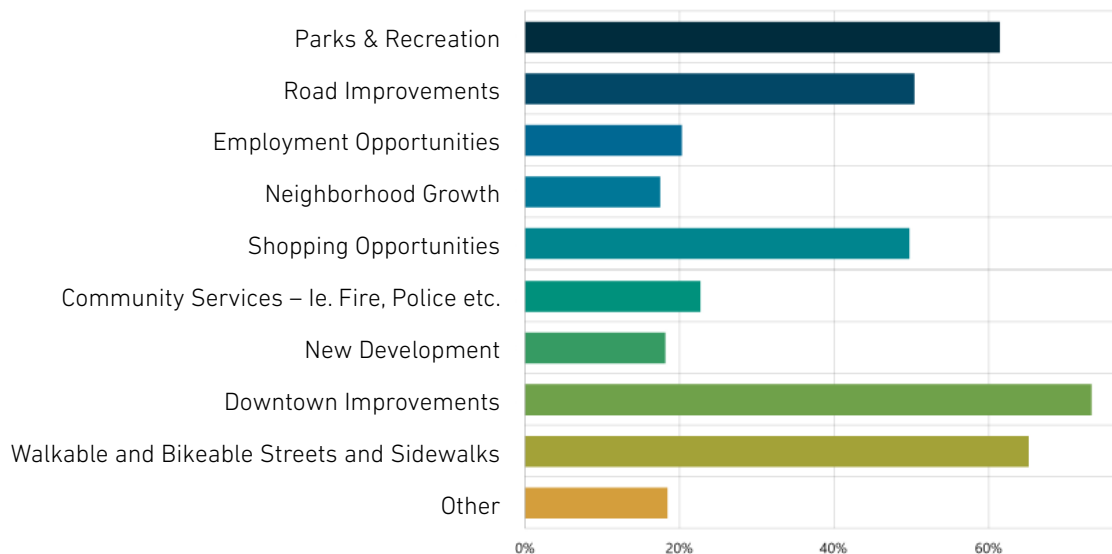


Figure 5: Survey, Future Improvement Prioritization

## HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT

**Housing Supply & Affordability:** Many respondents call for more housing options, especially affordable housing and starter homes that could serve younger families, the workforce, and seniors. Comments include “More affordable housing” and requests for “more availability of housing for young families/first time home buyers.” There is interest in denser infill development downtown to meet demand.

**Mixed-Use & Density:** Several people support mixed-use developments (homes above shops) to create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods: “Even more mixed-use developments... more condos, duplexes, etc. You name it. Anything”.

**Concerns About Overdevelopment:** In contrast to supports of density, many established respondents are concerned that too much apartment construction is changing Verona’s character and creating too great a burden on infrastructure. Comments like “Stop building so many apartment buildings... Verona is taking away too much land, green space” express fear of losing the small-town feel.

**Home Ownership and Neighborhood Character:** Suggestions include promoting owner-occupied units (condos, townhomes) to encourage long-term residents. One respondent wants “more owner occupied housing... 2-3 bedroom, along with beginner... homes along with homes for seniors.” While many respondents recognize the need for rental housing, there was a strong desire to establish a path to ownership to support long-term community buy-in from residents.

**“More housing oriented to the paths. This is a great idea for those who get around without a car..”**

- Online Survey

### Are you in your dream home today?

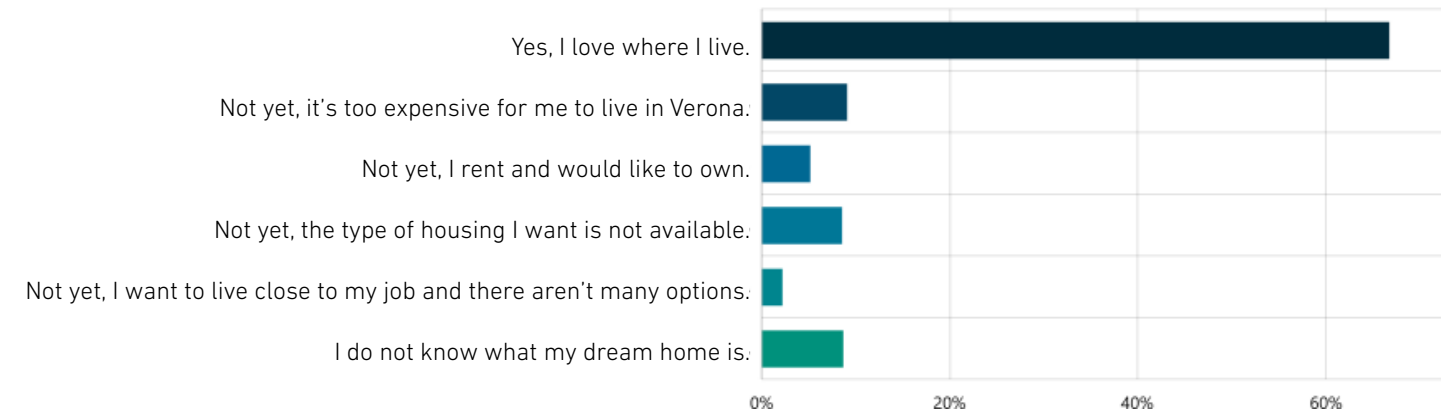


Figure 6: Survey, Housing - Individuals Living in their Dream Home



- Online Survey

**Of the housing types listed below, which would you like to see more of in Verona?**

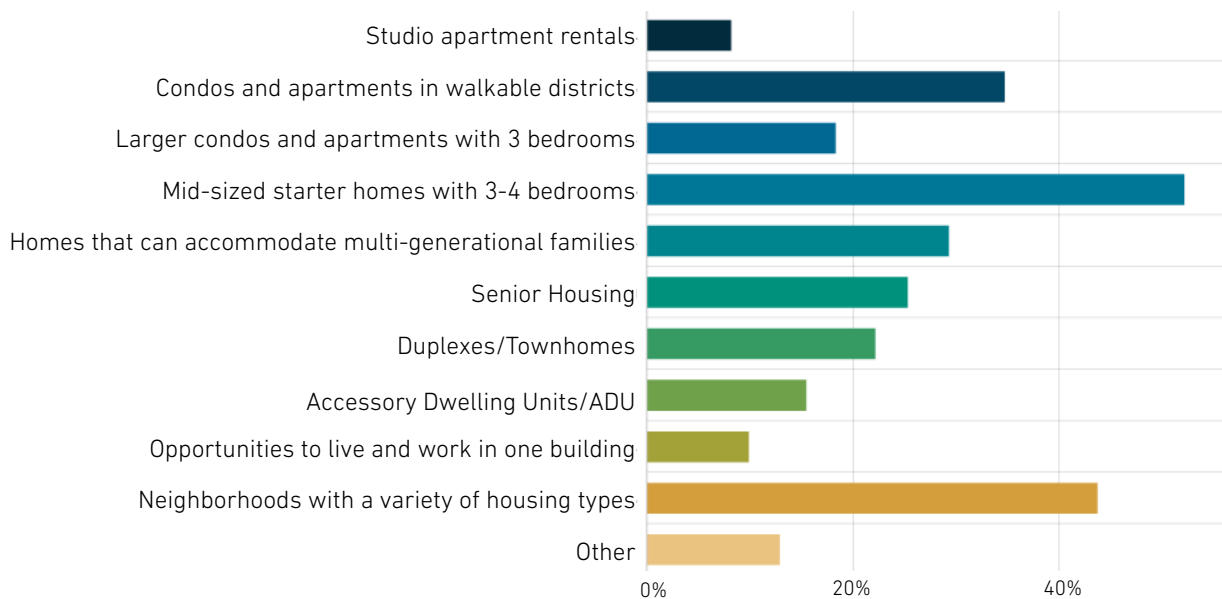


**Figure 7: Survey, Housing - Needed Housing Types**

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER & IDENTITY

**Small-Town Identity:** Many comments emphasize preserving Verona's small-town charm. As one resident put it: "I love the small town aspect and feel of Verona...". Maintaining this hometown atmosphere is a high priority. This relates to many different topics: local businesses, access to open space, architecture character, and walkability.

**Downtown Appearance:** Many note that downtown could use aesthetic improvements. Quotes mention "Downtown is an eyesore. Need more options for restaurants....". Residents encourage facade improvements, outdoor dining, and events to make downtown more welcoming.

**Architectural Character:** Architectural character was a recurring theme, with multiple respondents suggesting a stricter design review of buildings. Newer housing developments (Veridian) and multi-family apartment buildings were flagged for being out of scale or aesthetically discordant with the rest of the City.

**Community Pride:** Despite plenty of critique, there's a lot of appreciation for what already existing. Comments include "Great small town grocery store!", "Great library", and "I appreciate all the pickleball courts—thank you!". In general there is a lot of pride in Verona's community institutions and services.

## ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

**Sustainability Initiatives:** Many respondents call for environmentally friendly policies. Examples include encouraging solar panels and EV charging through ordinances ("Encourage solar & EV chargers through zoning/ordinances"), and enforcing dark-sky compliant lighting ("Require warm color temperature outdoor lighting"). There are suggestions to encourage green building features in new developments.

**Tree Planting and Greenery:** There is interest in more trees and landscaping. Comments ask for "More tree planting. Deciduous and evergreen... drought-tolerant vegetation." Medians and public spaces are seen as areas to improve with greenery, wildflower plantings, and rain gardens.

**Managing Growth vs. Nature:** Residents emphasize preserving green space and protecting from encroaching development. Comments include "Keep our green spaces & Rec areas from being over developed". Some believe protecting farmland and open space is critical. The idea of increasing density in developed areas appears in several comments ("Preserve nature, increase density to improve walkability").

***"I love the small town aspect and feel of Verona."***

- Online Survey

### What do you enjoy the most about living or working in Verona?

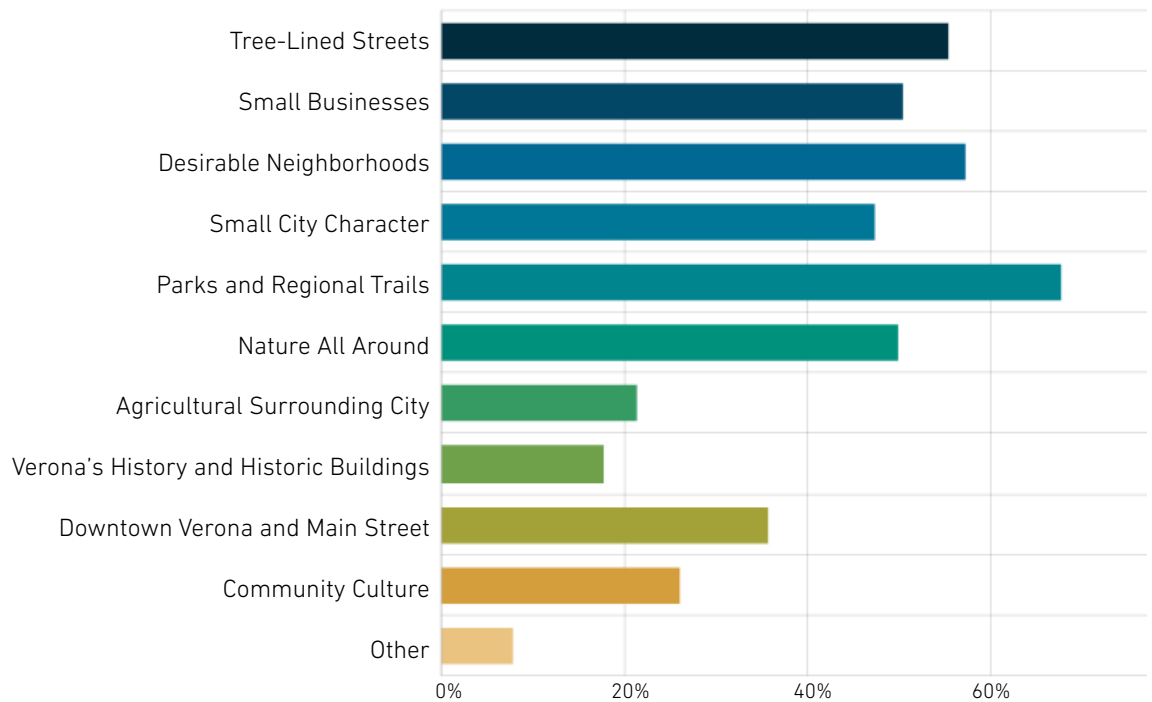


Figure 8: Survey, What Respondents Enjoy Most About Living and Working in Verona

### Help us understand what quality of life in Verona means to you.

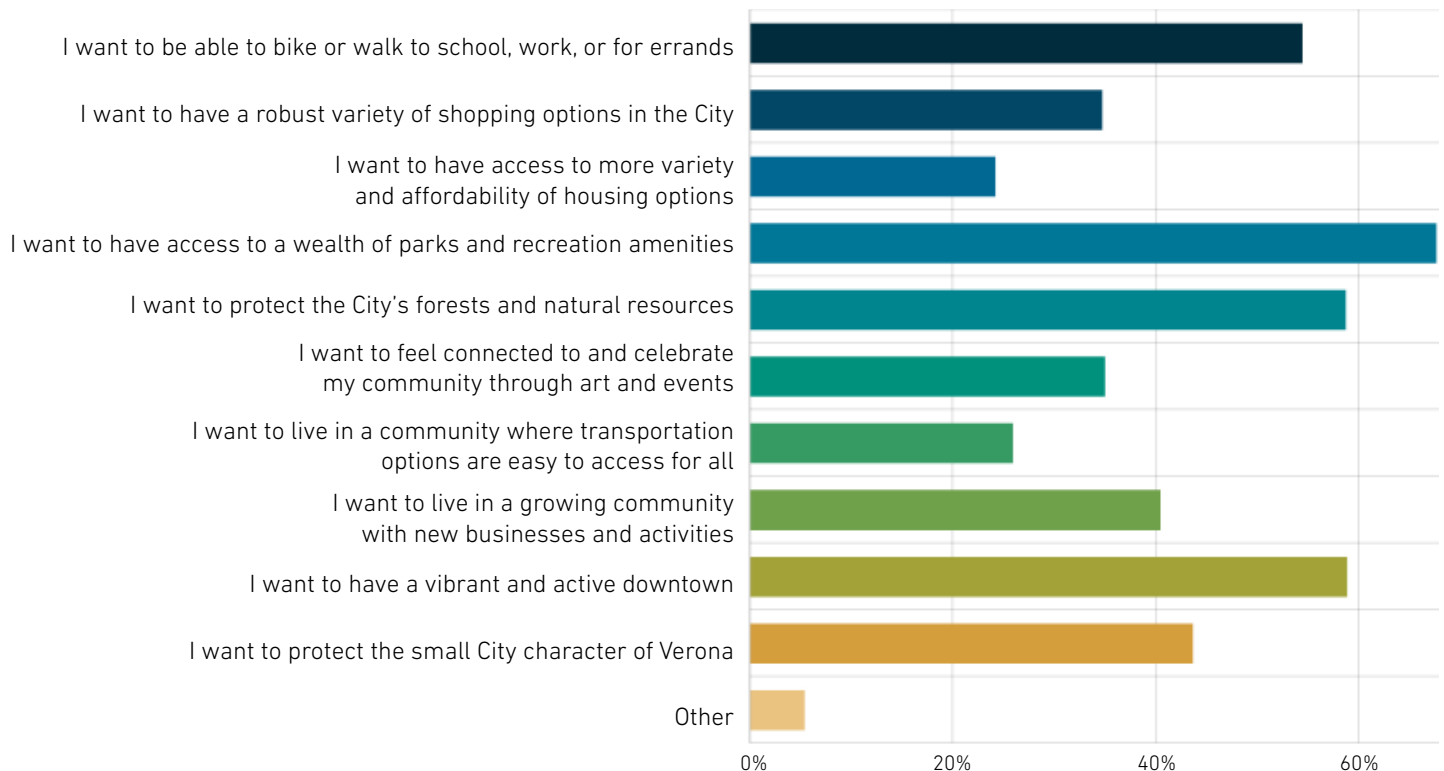


Figure 9: Survey, Respondents Thoughts on Quality of Life in Verona

# KEY STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

A variety of local and regional stakeholders were engaged in early 2025. These organizations and individuals represent key constituencies that bring an informed perspective, such as employment, small businesses, or housing development, among others. Stakeholders and their comments were kept anonymous as to facilitate an open and informed discussion. The key categories of stakeholders included the following:

- + Major Employers & Industries
- + Property Owners
- + Small Businesses
- + Seniors
- + Real Estate Brokers
- + Developers

## TOPICS

There is a need for a clear and defined vision for growth to inform brokers, property owners, and developers who are trying to build and expand. Understanding the City's priorities and timelines is needed to unlock the next steps for interested and willing parties.

**Relationships are Key:** There was repeated recognition that due to recent City staff turnover, historic lines of communication and relationships had changed. Additionally, employee retention and consistency is desired by the business owners.

**Infrastructure Limitations:** There is a need for improved transportation, particularly public transit expansion, biking infrastructure, and parking solutions.

**Business & Economic Growth Constraints:** Retail and office leasing remain difficult due to low daytime traffic and competition from Madison. Small businesses struggle with visibility, workforce recruitment, and inconsistent communication regarding local events.

**Housing Demand & Affordability:** There is high demand for residential development, but affordability, zoning restrictions, and parking ordinances complicate new projects. Workforce housing and mixed-use developments face financial and regulatory hurdles.

**Downtown Lacks Identity:** Downtown Verona is a place that is a favorite for many residents, but the heavy traffic and surface parking lots make the area feel disjointed and unpleasant to travel by foot, bike, and car.

## BARRIERS TO GROWTH

**Zoning & Permitting Complexity:** Clearer communication of expectations for zoning and permitting process will decrease uncertainty and avoid delays for developers.

**Infrastructure Gaps:** Water, sewage, and transportation issues make certain areas difficult to develop, particularly in areas planned for future annexation and industrial areas.

**Retail Market Struggles:** Businesses struggle with high vacancy rates, lack of pedestrian traffic, and an insufficient lunch crowd to sustain daytime activity.

**Labor Market Shortages:** Difficulty in finding skilled workers for certain industries, particularly in food service and accommodation, due to competition from Madison and limited local training options.

**Parking & Traffic Issues:** Lack of coordinated parking strategies and increased congestion affect both businesses and future development.

## OPPORTUNITIES

**Downtown Revitalization:** Increasing residential density and mixed-use development could create a stronger business environment and enhance walkability.

**Streamlining Development Approvals:** Reducing rezoning requirements, improving communication between city staff and developers, and deferring impact fees could accelerate growth.

**Enhanced Public Transit & Mobility:** Expanding bus routes, prioritizing biking infrastructure, and improving last-mile connectivity as well as walkability could support workforce mobility and economic growth.

**Leveraging Workforce Housing Initiatives:** Utilizing WHEDA tax credits, reducing parking mandates, and waiving impact fees for this housing type could facilitate more affordable housing development.

**Targeted Business Support:** Creating a downtown business incubator, improving coordination for event awareness among small businesses, and identifying key parcels for commercial growth.

## BIG IDEAS

**Hotels & Event Infrastructure:** A lack of conference facilities and limited hotel capacity limits economic opportunities tied to Epic Systems Corporation incorporated and regional events – recent hotel project downtown by Forward Development Group was not approved due to lack of parking.

**Re-Purposing Key Properties:** Concepts such as converting the old library into a cultural center or using vacant parcels near bike trails for development.

**Reevaluating Parking Requirements:** Flexibility in parking mandates could reduce costs and open up land for higher-density development in specific instances.

**Developer-City Partnerships:** Facilitating developer roundtables or providing direct leads on land opportunities, similar to models in other Wisconsin cities, could encourage developers to build in ways that are sympathetic to the City's desires.

**Verona Business Development Role:** Hiring a dedicated economic development specialist to improve engagement between the city, developers, and business owners.

**Downtown Training Center or Business Incubator:** Finding a site to place a food and accommodation training center or business incubator could be a boon to Downtown Verona, increase the labor pool, and drive lunch crowds.