# Stoughton Sustainability Committee
# Community Dialogue Summary Report


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# Overview

The Stoughton Sustainability Committee hosted a community dialogue on September 21, 2022 regarding how to advance the goals of sustainability in the City of Stoughton. Participants:

- **Learned** about the Sustainability Committee and reviewed the vision and goals for each of the sustainability plan focus areas: energy, transportation, water, solid waste, land use & development, and community engagement & education.
- **Heard** about the City's sustainability initiatives. Stoughton has already implemented several efforts to move toward a low carbon future and to protect valuable natural resources.
- **Shared** ideas for how to make Stoughton a more sustainable city.

**What is sustainability?**

- Sustainability is defined commonly as, "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Brundtland Report, 1987)
- Sustainability includes a healthy environment, a just economy, and equity & social well-being. (Sustain Dane)
- For a video overview, click here - What is Sustainability?

The City of Stoughton's Sustainability Committee is writing a Sustainability Plan, which will identify actions and policies to improve the community's environmental, social, and economic health. The development of the sustainability plan considers the suggestions and concerns of residents through community dialogues, survey findings, and other forms of public engagement.

This report is a summary of comments and ideas generated at the Community Dialogue on September 21, 2022. Prior to the Community Dialogue, Committee members have learned about sustainability topics from City Departments, County Departments, and other communities within Dane County. Committee members collaboratively identified six focus areas (Energy, Water, Solid Waste Management, Land Use & Development, Transportation, and Community) and developed a vision and goals for each of these focus areas. At the Community Dialogue, participants discussed the vision and goal statements in small group discussions, and were asked to provide comments and ideas to make these goals reality. The ideas shared by participants are summarized below, by focus area. Note that there were several specific actions that were suggested in multiple focus areas, underlining the interconnectedness of these issues. Participants also addressed challenges that the Sustainability Committee may face - such as apathy, cost, and implementation.

While everything in this report may not be within the Sustainability Committee's scope of work, the ideas shared during the Community Dialogue should be used to understand the community's values towards sustainability in Stoughton. The Committee will then evaluate these ideas and determine how they can be turned into action.

There will be additional opportunities for community input through a community survey, educational display and a virtual dialogue.

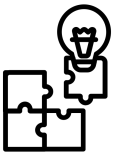
# How this report is organized

At each table conversation (tables were organized by focus area), comments from participants were captured on flip charts and simultaneously written by a committee member or volunteer. The comments were reviewed, grouped, and synthesized by the editors.

The report is organized first by focus area. Within each focus area, we provide the questions that were posed at the table discussion and a summary of responses.

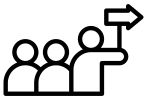
In reviewing comments from participants, the editors recognized that suggestions followed some fairly consistent themes. These include:

**Educational Opportunities:** Educational opportunities were identified in each of the issue areas. While it was not specified who should conduct the education, the City or Sustainability Committee could coordinate educational opportunities with other organizations.



**Advancing Solutions:** Participants suggested solutions in each issue area, often recognizing that current efforts were underway, while suggesting ideas that the Sustainability Committee could put forth to increase the adoption of sustainability practices.

**Reducing Barriers:** A number of solutions could pose significant challenges for community members and businesses.This category of responses focused on ideas for the Stoughton Community to help overcome those obstacles.



**Fostering Community Leadership:** There were many ideas given which would empower the community to make informed decisions about, and to be involved with the future of sustainability in Stoughton

**Collaboration and Partnerships:** Community members provided a number of suggestions about the need to work with different organizations in and outside of Stoughton to ensure that the goals of the Sustainability Committee are met

# Energy

Vision:

The City of Stoughton reduces its operational impact on energy resources that contribute to climate change, and supports business and community efforts in doing the same. The City achieves this by embracing energy efficiency and conservation, while decreasing the use of fossil fuels.

Goals:

1. Reduce total greenhouse gas emissions
2. Achieve 100% renewable electricity supply
3. Reduce total energy consumption.
4. Decrease energy intensity (quantity of energy/unit of activity). This will allow for decreases in energy while allowing for growth

For the complete list of comments from the public collected at the 9/21 dialogue, see HERE.

1. **What aspects of the vision and goals that the Sustainability Committee presented appeal to you? What aspects do you find potentially problematic?**

*Support/Positive*: there was general support for the vision and goals. These broad goals (such as written) allow for specific actions to follow. There were questions about the intent behind goal 4 (and the intent of the term 'energy intensity'). Participants identified specific actions that would support the goals presented, with widespread support for efforts that increased energy **efficiency**.

*Questions/Concerns:*

a) The main concern with the goals as written is that there are challenges with reaching 100% renewable energy, and potential disruptions to continuous electricity provision if all sources of energy were renewable.
   - would that jeopardize reliability when wind/solar aren't going?
   - is there need to mix renewable with nonrenewable supplies, to assure continuity of energy supply?

b) Switching to renewable energy will require sourcing materials globally, which could have negative impacts on people and places beyond Stoughton. A participant pointed out that materials for solar panels, batteries, and other devices depend on a global supply chain, and that current production and extraction methods are environmentally and socially problematic.

c) The goals, as written, place responsibility and action with the City of Stoughton, making it difficult to see how the community will be engaged in meeting the goals.
d) While the vision and goals are 'beautiful,' the cost of implementation must be considered.
    - What is the return on investment?
    - How will these be achieved (who will pay?)?
e) Participants noted that the City will grow. A participant asked:"What things does the city invest in that are force multipliers?"

**2. What incentives and planning should we do to conserve or generate energy? What can the city do to plan for energy conservation and generation?**

*Education opportunities*: Participants encouraged education programs on energy generation (rooftop solar or wind) and on opportunities for energy conservation. There is untapped potential to generate energy using rooftop solar. Numerous homeowners spoke to the challenge of both knowing the process and identifying companies to work with to install solar. Education programs could include: how to find and evaluate contractors, how to establish a buy-back from the utility company, how to tap into financial incentives, and whether one's home is a candidate for solar energy. Energy conservation can have a big impact if practiced by the majority of households and businesses. Several participants emphasized the importance of educating community members on energy intensity and on common practices to improve at-home energy efficiency, including home retrofits; upgrading appliances to more energy efficient units; drying clothes on lines outside; and reusing and reducing purchases.

There is also opportunity to provide education to contractors to introduce energy efficient options in new construction or in home retrofits and updating. Specific suggestions included European style on-demand electric hot water systems, heat pumps, and white roofs to reflect heat.

*Advancing Solutions–Solar energy generation:* The city has an opportunity to promote solar by providing financial incentives such as grants or loans (or tap into existing incentives) for households to build solar rooftop capacity or other energy generation capacity (wind). Beyond incentives, the city can advance energy generation by prioritizing solar installation on large buildings, such as schools.

A consideration about externalities: Concerns expressed regarding the promotion of solar were threefold: (1) Life cycle efficiency and analysis: Participants were concerned with the life-cycle aspects of solar components (energy use in construction, materials used, disposal) and suggested that there be mechanisms to evaluate companies and materials, (2) Impact on countries that produce components or provide raw materials: oftentimes the labor and environmental conditions under which component parts are manufactured or extracted are invisible to consumers.

*Advancing Solutions–Wind energy generation:* Rural neighbors may have the capacity to generate energy from wind. The utility and city could work with landowners to establish wind turbines. To encourage wind energy, the city can establish ordinances that treat turbines like an appliance, making it easier to permit.

*Advancing Solutions–Conservation and energy efficiency:* The city can encourage energy conservation and efficiency by using incentives as well as mandates (requirements). Incentives could be offered for energy efficient building and appliances (new buildings), retrofitting heating/cooling systems. The city can also impose requirements, such as that all new construction be 100% electric and have solar rooftop, or that larger buildings (such as schools), be required to upgrade to more efficient lighting, heating, and cooling.

Participants generated numerous options for resident involvement in energy efficiency, including:

a) Stoughton Utilities uses on-peak/off peak metering. They could provide metering incentives and promote the program more widely.
b) Manufacturers should add cost of disposal to goods produced, which would reduce the life-cycle cost of materials production and to encourage materials reuse.
c) To get more people involved in the effort of energy conservation, consider ways to make convincing arguments beyond environmental sustainability (such as cost effectiveness). Make the right choice the easy choice!
d) Replace appliances (only when necessary) with more energy efficient options.

*Reducing Barriers:* The barrier mentioned most often by participants was the barrier to installing rooftop solar, due to the complexity of the process, the limits on how much energy the utility can buy-back, and the difficulty of finding a viable and reliable contractor. These barriers can be reduced through educational programs and partnership between the City and Stoughton Utilities (see below, collaboration and partnerships).

*Fostering Community Leadership - Business sustainability initiatives:* The business community can play a role by setting a leadership example, in adopting energy conservation practices for their own businesses. Additionally, technology and innovation companies should explore development of new technologies such as solar cells as roofing.

*Collaboration and Partnerships:* Participants recommended that the City work with Stoughton Utilities to promote rooftop solar as cost effective, and make it easier for homeowners to install solar. Participants indicated that there were restrictions on buying back solar energy generated from rooftop solar (eliminate the ceiling on how much can be sold back), and suggested that the City of Stoughton work with Stoughton Utilities to eliminate the barriers to solar rooftop expansion. Additionally, Stoughton Utilities gets its power supply from WPPI Energy (a member owned, nonprofit that serves 51 locally owned electric utilities). WPPI's fuel mix portfolio (2021) includes coal contracts that they are locked into. The City and Stoughton Utilities should look for another energy provider or put up their own solar facility, with or without WPPI.

The City can also work with the Stoughton School District to prioritize energy generation on larger school buildings, and to prioritize energy conservation in any building rehab (especially heating and cooling systems).

The city can also work with local nonprofit organizations or with Stoughton Utilities by communicating opportunities for conservation with residents. Programs that recognize people and businesses that are doing a good job with cutting back on energy use encourage such activity, and inform others of how to reduce energy bills.

**3. What should the city itself do to reduce energy use?**

*Advancing Solutions:* The city has a large role to play in energy generation and conservation, both in its own internal operations and in support of residents.

a) To demonstrate leadership, the City should install solar on all city facilities (buildings, park shelters), and develop solar powered stations for charging electric vehicles.
b) The City should do an assessment of what lights are needed, and where. While LED lights in buildings are a good step forward, they might not need to be on all night. Use of movement sensors could cut back on energy use significantly. Soft lighting in buildings and parking lots would also support dark skies. Participants noted that there is significant light pollution generated by businesses with lights on all the time.
c) Increasing tree canopy through planing of shade trees (discussed under land use more extensively) can reduce building energy use by providing natural cooling.
d) The City and RDA can also promote energy efficiency along with the development of affordable multi-family housing, by requiring energy efficient building and equipment, by developing on infill, allowing housing on smaller lots, and allowing ADUs (accessory dwelling units)

*Reducing Barriers:* The City can examine zoning policy (covenants) that might discourage sustainability practices (e.g., hanging clothes outside on a line)

# Land Use, Development and Building Codes

Vision:

The City of Stoughton acknowledges that land is a precious resource and strives to increase developed areas conservatively, only as needed to meet the needs of its growing population. The encourages compact, efficient growth that incorporates mixed use development, diversity of housing types, thriving businesses, and preserved and restored natural habitats.

Goals:

1. Provide housing for all income levels
2. Promote bicycle and pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and business districts
3. Increase the density of housing and population.
4. Protect environmentally sensitive areas.
5. Increase tree cover.
6. Increase land area in natural & native vegetation.
7. Increase use of sustainable building practices, including net-zero.
8. Supporting local sustainable agriculture

For the complete list of comments from the public collected at the 9/21/22 dialogue, see HERE.

**What aspects of the vision and goals that the Sustainability Committee presented appeal to you? What aspects do you find potentially problematic?**

*Supportive/positive:* There was general support for the vision and goals. Specifically there was support for the mixed use development.

*Questions/concerns:* For clarification purposes, participants asked for definitions of local and sustainable agriculture. There was a comment to increase bike-ability along with increasing multi-use trails that provide opportunities for hiking, biking, and interpretation. General curiosity of how these goals will be achieved was discussed. A few comments also expressed the need to partner with neighboring towns on these goals, explicitly state where the boundaries of this work are, and develop boundary agreements with townships.

**Dane County has some of the best farmland in the state. Land in cover (grassland, prairie and forest) is critical for water infiltration and carbon sequestration. What land use tools would you support to preserve farmland and natural areas?**

*Educational Opportunities*: Various educational opportunities were identified including educating on the importance of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations and the benefits of native plants. Specifically, the following ideas were provided:

a) Coordinate a garden tour throughout Stoughton that displays lawns that were converted to native grasses.
b) The City can have a native plant sale and utilize the sale as an opportunity to educate about the benefits of native plants.

*Advancing Solutions- Enhancing farmland:* The City should first work to prioritize which farmland should be preserved. For an approach of how to do this, Stoughton could work with neighboring communities and see approaches they've taken. The City should work with farmers to help them utilize conservation practices that prevent soil erosion and protect the land for future generations. Participants debated on whether or not the best use of land would be either for solar farms or keeping it as traditional farm land. This is something that participants urged the City to consider and evaluate the value of both. While solar farms can provide a renewable energy source, there is a loss of farmland, which is important to Stoughton's identity and heritage.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations are important to the community and participants urged to support the use of CSAs. The City could also help support getting another co-op for farmers to use or advertise vegetable stands in the community. This would make it easier for the community to buy from local farmers. The current community gardens in Stoughton are not full, and the City should promote the use of gardens and increase them as Stoughton grows.

*Advancing Solutions–Development*: Participants expressed support in mix-used development (of housing and businesses) in order to utilize small city lots, and preserve area farmland. The intent should also be to make this housing affordable. There was also interest in rethinking the use of buildings downtown, and could use existing buildings for hotels or housing. As Stoughton continues to grow, participants expressed the need to understand if new developments are being built as efficiently as they can be. If not, the City should work with developers to promote efficiency in new development with strategies like rooftop solar installations.

*Advancing Solutions–Increasing natural areas:* Participants shared the many opportunities to increase natural areas in Stoughton by converting lawns into native grasses. They felt that the easiest strategy would be for the City to plant terraces in native grasses. The City could also encourage the conversion of lawns at larger spaces like churches, schools and parks. Within parks, participants expressed interest in more trees that are either fruit bearing or large shade trees. There could be a map that educates the public on different types of tree species and their benefits. A comment suggested to re-establish native plantings along the river.
For promoting the conversion of homeowners lawns, the City could change noxious weeds ordinances, restrictions on grass lengths, etc. The City could also host a grant program, provide a stipend, or provide a tax credit to assist homeowners in the conversion of lawns. Additionally, the City could promote the use of electric lawn mowers to reduce emissions.

**Increasing the tree canopy can reduce heat islands, thereby decreasing energy use during the summer. What can the City and public do to promote more tree planting?**

*Educational Opportunities:* Participants expressed the need to educate on the overall benefits of trees and their ability to save energy. The City has the tree commission and the City Forester as resources and the City should make the community aware of these resources. Some specific educational opportunities were identified:

a) Specifically target developers in education on the value of trees so that they can increase tree canopy as Stoughton grows. Guidelines could be created that outline best practices for increasing tree cover in new development. This information should be shared with developers and their customers.
b) Residents may want to plant trees on their property, but they may not know how to maintain it. Participants suggested having a demonstration site in a park that would have certain recommended tree species at ages 5, 10, and 20 years to educate residents on different tree species and the maintenance required at these ages.

*Advancing Solutions–Increasing Tree Canopy:* First, the City should assess current tree policies for developments and homeowners. From there, the City should determine which species of tree should be planted, and ensure that plantings are coordinated with solar so that trees aren't inhibiting areas for generating renewable energy. When determining which species of trees should be planted, the City should be considering what people would prefer near their home. Participants shared that they felt the City has preferred smaller trees, but larger trees may provide more benefits. In order to support tree growth across the community, the City can support the following:

a) Bury wires and use alternatives to asphalt to help promote tree growth
b) Require businesses to plant a certain amount of trees in their landscaping
c) Revise tree policies for developments to encourage planting large shade trees and encourage owners to maintain the tree canopy throughout ownership.

*Advancing Solutions–Increasing Tree Canopy in Public areas:* There was general support among participants for more trees in public parks. An idea shared was to have more natural plan areas in parks where children are interacting with nature. Besides parks, participants discussed the opportunities to grow trees within parking lots, street medians, and terraces. Although the size of medians or terraces could be an issue for large shade trees, the City could provide tax incentives to assist with maintenance and planting.

# Transportation

Vision:

Create a multi-modal approach to transportation for the City of Stoughton that emphasizes the wellness of the community, reducing pollution and improving livability, making clean, energy-efficient transportation a more desirable option for city employees, residents and businesses.

Goals:

1. Decrease use of fossil fuels, including increased use of electric and alternate fuel (eg., fuel cell, hydrogen) vehicles.
2. Increase electric and alternative fuel infrastructure.
3. Adopt "green streets" planning approach to new and modified roadways.
4. Increase connectability of cycling routes.
5. Develop transit alternatives to the one-person, one-vehicle model currently used.

For the complete list of comments from the public collected at the 9/21 dialogue, see HERE.

**What aspects of the vision and goals that the Sustainability Committee presented appeal to you? What aspects do you find potentially problematic?**

*Supportive/Positive:* The vision and goal statements were roundly accepted. Participants proposed elaborated strategy ideas for the goal statements.

Transit alternatives should be explored, as there are no public transportation options between Stoughton and Madison. Participants supported efforts to use the existing railroad to reestablish the train route between Stoughton and Madison, and to increase access to regional rail transportation. Options for intra city transportation via train, trolley, and bus should be supported. Efforts to establish a Park and Ride (linking to ride share and/or public buses) would be worth considering, even though not successful in the past.

While transit alternatives are the preferred option to solve the dilemma of the one-person per car model, participants recognized interim steps, including roundabouts (which reduce stop and go traffic), green streets (roadways that are not just driveable but bikeable and walkable), and improving bikeability.

*Questions/Concerns:* It may be challenging to make transit alternatives (to the one-person, one-vehicle model) more attractive to residents. Many residents commute to Madison and have

few to no transportation alternatives. A second challenge is for people living in rural areas around Stoughton, where there are no transportation alternatives and even school buses have limited routes. Due to these constraints, the committee should focus on more sustainable personal vehicles.

**How can the city support multimodal transportation options?**

The City has the opportunity to support multimodal transportation options, with attention to multi-city public transportation, developing a robust bicycle infrastructure, and promoting pedestrian friendly streets/sidewalks/paths.

*Advancing Solutions & Reducing Barriers*: All of the opportunities for supporting multimodal transportation options fall simultaneously under 'advancing solutions' and 'reducing barriers' - in that the solutions reduce the barriers to utilization of public transportation and other multimodal transportation options.

Specific suggestions regarding <u>multi-city transportation options</u>:

a) Plan for and invest in current and future infrastructure (e.g., park and ride, train, trolley, bike paths, bike lanes).
b) Ensure that pedestrian and bicycle safety are prioritized.
c) Connect Stoughton and surrounding rural areas to Madison and other nearby communities, in order to reduce necessity of commuters relying on personal vehicles.
d) City fleet should be all hybrid electric, in order to set an example for vehicle owners.
e) Develop an infrastructure to support hybrid electric vehicles and bikes (charging stations).
f) Establish a Park and Ride and develop a City/employer partnership to address 'last mile' transportation alternatives (to get people downtown or to their places of employment).
g) Encourage the development of ride share programs. Use technology (apps) to coordinate ride scheduling.
h) Support employer/employee transportation programs. Stoughton Trailers currently buses in workers; Verona also provides transportation to Epic workers; these models could be studied.

Specific suggestions regarding the <u>bike infrastructure</u> include:

a) Develop more bike paths to outlying communities, as well as creating more bike paths to Madison.
b) Increase the connectability of cycling routes, especially through the industrial area
c) Provide programs that make biking more affordable (bike maintenance support, bike rental).

d) Increase bike lanes on roads, including Hwy 51.
e) Establish bike routes to and from Stoughton Schools.
f) Incentivize kids to walk or bike to school, using 'safe routes to school'.
g) Be attentive to safety, with the development of crosswalks (with flashing crossing signals), night lights for bike paths.
h) More bike racks, and use of bike racks as art.
i) Bike and electric bike group trips

Specific suggestions regarding developing a pedestrian friendly infrastructure:

a) Be attentive to safety of pedestrians, with crosswalks and night-time lighting.
b) Develop sidewalks and pedestrian pathways.
c) Work on connectivity with existing paths.

**Should the city partner with Madison to provide bus routes?**

Participants supported partnering with Madison to provide bus transport, but with caveats, and recognizing the fiscal difficulties of doing so. In order for a program to work, service must be regular and reliable, even in inclement weather. Workers, commuters, and young people would benefit from this service. Several participants suggested that it would be beneficial to also connect with McFarland, Oregon, and other close-by communities. Madison is very much a hub for many communities, and all cities, towns, and villages surrounding the Madison hub could be connected with a 'wheel and spoke' model of regional transportation.

# Water

Vision: The City of Stoughton, including residents and businesses, conserve, protect, restore, and advocate for groundwater and surface water resources, ensuring clean water is available for drinking, recreation, fishing, and the support of healthy aquatic habitat.

Goals:

1. Conserve groundwater by increasing water use efficiency and taking actions that decrease the wasteful use of water
2. Protect groundwater from potential contaminants
3. Protect local waters by managing surface runoff quantity and quality
4. Manage riparian land use so as to protect surface water quality and enhance aquatic habitat.

For the complete list of comments from the public collected at the 9/21/22 dialogue, see HERE.

**What aspects of the vision and goals that the Sustainability Committee presents appeal to you? What aspects do you find potentially problematic?**

*Supportive/positive:* There was support for these vision and goals and the emphasis of protection of water sources. Participants were appreciative of the community engagement and involvement of business.

*Questions/concerns:* Some participants felt that the goals were too broad and wanted measures for evaluating success. When communicating these goals to the public, it was suggested to simplify these issues. Participants encouraged the City to consider the fact that Stoughton is connected to the Yahara watershed and these efforts will have to go beyond City boundaries. These goals should also be shared with the wastewater treatment plant to ensure that their goals align. As the discussion progressed, participants suggested the addition of the following goals:

a) A goal around water education that is done in an inclusive manner
b) A goal that includes policies towards consequences for individuals or entities who are impeding progress on these goals.

There were many questions from participants on ground and surface water quality in Stoughton. While these are not directly related to the vision and goals, these questions will likely come up again, and the City should keep these questions in mind:

a) Is lead a concern in Stoughton's water supply?
b) There has been historical industrial pollution in Stoughton, including two superfund sites. Where do these stand now and should there be goals to support clean up efforts?
c) From a water treatment perspective, are these efforts focusing on all contaminants in ground and surface water?

**Stoughton relies on groundwater – deep wells – for its drinking water supply. Groundwater is a finite resource. How can we incentivize water conservation by homeowners and businesses?**

*Educational Opportunities–Groundwater topics:*Participants identified a need to understand more about groundwater that services Stoughton. Topics within groundwater education should include:

a) Where Stoughton gets its water from
b) The safety of Stoughton's water
c) Recharge areas for municipal wells
d) Education on municipal wells vs private wells and any plans to drill more municipal wells
e) Actions that homeowners can take to conserve and protect groundwater like rain barrels, rain gardens, and low flush toilets
f) Millpond Dam concerns, and if removing it will affect Stoughton's groundwater.

Education on these topics could be done at specific events or have posters near drinking fountains or sinks in public buildings.

*Educational Opportunities–Water Conservation:* Participants had many different ideas on strategies that the City could use to improve understanding of groundwater in Stoughton and water conservation strategies. The following ideas were provided:

a) Rain barrels and rain gardens could be used at parks or public places with signage to teach about the benefits of these practices.
b) The City could host a neighborhood competition to decrease water use. This should be paired with strategies homeowners can do to conserve water
c) Involve the high school and youth-led community groups to assist with creating outreach materials and programs. Youth can also be used as a way to bring education to their families.
d) Events and signage in public places, and social media campaigns around water conservation.

*Reducing barriers*: Besides education, participants expressed that water conservation does have some barriers. If anything should be done to water prices, participants stressed that it should be done in an equitable manner and to be mindful of how raising prices could affect low-income

communities. The City could provide incentives for residents to purchase water saving toilets and on-demand hot water heaters.

*Advancing Solutions–Groundwater protection:* In order to protect our groundwater resources, the City could plant native species in public spaces to protect groundwater. The City could incentivize residents for native plants on private property.

**Severe storms and heavy rainfall have become more common. This increases the risk to property from flooding, and contamination of the Yahara River, which is central to Stoughton's identity.**

> **What can the City/residents do to decrease risk of property damage from flooding?**
> **What can the City/residents do to decrease contamination of our waters (the Yahara River and its tributaries) by stormwater runoff?**

*Educational Opportunities–Reducing stormwater runoff:* Participants had various ideas of opportunities with the goals of increasing awareness about water quality concerns and helping residents adopt best management practices to reduce runoff.

a) Educate and provide resources to the community about rain barrels. Rain barrels can be put at community gardens and youth groups could paint the rain barrels so they are attractive.
b) Engage the community through a service day where community members clean storm drains of leaves. McFarland has done something similar to this.
c) Educate around best practices for lawn management. This could include conversion of lawns into native grasses, establishing rain gardens, and mowing frequencies. Assist homeowners by providing resources on specific native plants for reducing runoff, and allowing for different lawn lengths year round.
d) Stormwater ponds will likely increase in communities as Stoughton grows. Residents should be educated on the purpose of these ponds and the water quality of stormwater ponds. Within new developments, consider the need for sump pumps and alternatives for sidewalks as they are an impervious surface that can contribute to runoff.

*Educational Opportunities–Surface water*: Participants expressed the need to provide and support educational programs that would increase awareness around local surface water quality concerns.

a) Support citizen science for stream monitoring and aquatic invasive species detection. There are many state and regional programs to link to in this effort.
b) Educate on the process of wastewater treatment and how it relates to the vision and goals of the Committee.
c) Inform the community about Millpond and the effect taking out the dam will have on local wildlife and water quality.

*Reducing barriers:* Practices to reduce runoff require an upfront cost. The City can provide tax incentives, and work with developers to build stormwater management practices into their budgets from the beginning of development. Additionally, the City could consider strategies that will infiltrate water naturally rather than installing storm sewers.

# Solid Waste Management

Vision:

The City of Stoughton supports the 3 R's - reduce, reuse, and recycle, in that order. The city will reduce the amount of waste sent to the landfill, while decreasing the amount of waste generated overall, and ensure that all waste is disposed of properly.

Goals:

1. Reduce wasteful consumption and overall quantity of waste generated.
2. Reduce the use of toxic products and materials that have negative impacts on environmental and human health.
3. Support the use of quality products that retain their value, usefulness and function so they can be reused and repaired.
4. Ensure systems are in place to dispose of all waste properly, including hazardous waste, recyclable materials, and compostable items.

For the complete list of comments from the public collected at the 9/21/22 dialogue, see HERE.

**What aspects of the vision and goals that the Sustainability Committee presented appeal to you? What aspects do you find potentially problematic?**

*Supportive/Positive:* There was general support for the vision and goals. Specifically, participants appreciated the prioritization of *reducing* and the focus on alternative handling strategies for waste.

*Questions and concerns:* For clarification purposes, there were comments on the need to define 'who' within the vision and goals–is it the city or households reducing waste? Participants also wanted to see a higher prioritization of food waste with the vision and goals. Although there was support for higher quality products, participants recognized that higher quality products can be more expensive, and this can create a barrier for people. A comment was made that as the City is looking to support these goals, the City needs to understand the waste regulations and opportunities and work within those spheres rather than recreating the system. There were general concerns about apathy within the community regarding solid waste management.

**What are options for reducing the amount of waste sent to the landfill?**

*Education opportunities*: Many participants identified the need for education on waste reduction strategies, including recycling. General comments were made that people may not know how to reduce waste, what happens to waste in Stoughton, or that certain products are toxic and should not be thrown in the dumpster. Specific ideas shared:

a) The City can work with John's to understand what the community is recycling incorrectly, and then forming education programs based off this information.
b) The City can work with John's to educate community members on how to handle items that don't belong in trash or recycling in a responsible manner.
c) Educational programs that teach skills like mending, composting, or host fix-it clinics
d) Schools could teach recycling, composting, and establish gardening programs.

*Advancing Solutions- Recycling*: Participants shared that they understand we aren't recycling as efficiently as possible. While this does take education, there are some additional incentives that participants identified to help making recycling more efficient in the community:

a) Establish fines or fees for entities who do not recycle
b) Connect with Marc Inc. to assist with sorting recyclable materials
c) The City can work with the community to create a recycling identity, advertise more widely what can be recycled and items that community members can take in and receive money for.
d) Incentives should be given to larger organizations for recycling

*Reducing barriers*: Participants recognized there are a lot of systemic barriers in place that make landfilling waste the easiest option. In order to reduce waste going to landfills, participants identified the following to address some of the barriers:

a) Trees that are taken down could be milled and used for lumber.
b) The City could host a 'Reuse page' or 'Free-cycle page' for community members to post items that they do not want anymore and find someone else to take and reuse those items
c) Centralized collection place for metal, food waste, and clothing swaps. Having centralized locations for these can make waste reduction convenient for the community.
d) Community-wide composting that includes curbside collection
e) The City of Stoughton could host a Clean-Sweep for hazardous waste collection.
f) The City should have water bottle refill stations in all public buildings.
g) Schools in Stoughton are in need of assistance with reducing food waste. For example, students are required to take all items given at lunch, when they may only eat one or two items. All the other items then go to waste. Providing education on food waste and composting in schools can help reduce the amount of food waste.
    i) Referendum funding should include funds to improve the cafeteria to create systems to reduce food waste.

*Collaboration & Partnerships:* Businesses within Stoughton have specific waste management needs, and the City should go to local businesses to understand how businesses are managing their waste. The City can also help create partnerships between businesses to find use for specific items that are taken to a landfill. Many businesses within Stoughton are environmentally conscious in other aspects, such as local foods, but maybe aren't thinking about waste reduction. The City can help promote waste reduction along with encouraging 'no-packaging' businesses in the community.

*Advancing solutions– waste in construction:* Participants shared that the City should take responsibility for handling construction waste. This includes providing contractors and home-owners guidelines to help them be more responsible with home construction and repair waste. Additionally, the City could provide rebates when more sustainable materials are used such as metal roofs.

**What are ways that the City's Department of Public Works can increase resident support for recycling?**

*Educational Opportunities*: The City can take the lead on education regarding recycling. This includes educating on the steps for recycling, and clarification on what materials can be recycled. Additionally, participants identified that there was some distrust in the community with regards to John's and if they are recycling materials that are put in recycling bins. The City can also use Syttende Mai as an opportunity to educate and increase the amount of recycling at the event. Volunteers could be used to assist in the sorting of recyclable materials at events like Syttende Mai.

*Reducing barriers:*The City can take a leadership role in reducing barriers to increase recycling within the community. This can include many strategies such as hosting events and establishing partnerships:

a) Establish community drop-off sites to recycle items that cannot be collected curbside such as batteries and appliances.
    i) These sites and dates should be added to the community calendar so residents can plan ahead.
b) The City can partner with File 13 in Madison to recycle electronic waste
c) Work with second-hand stores like St. Vincent DePaul's to have them outline what items they can and cannot accept.
d) Increase frequency of curbside collection of recycling to every week.

*Foster community leadership:* The City could create a committee that is responsible for harvesting house items like appliances and furniture that could be reused. The City can also encourage restaurants to allow customers to bring their own take-home containers. Restaurants can sign a community promise or charge customers to use a single-use container.

# Community Engagement & Education

Vision:

The City of Stoughton promotes an ethic of sustainability by encouraging and empowering residents, businesses, and community groups to take actions that improve environmental and human health. Through learning and engagement opportunities for residents, schools, businesses and organizations, sustainability is a part of life for all in our community.

Goals:

1. Increase collaboration and connections among citizens, businesses, schools, city government, and organizations to promote sustainability awareness & engagement.
2. Increase the sustainability awareness of Stoughton residents and businesses through innovative programs.
3. Increase the number of residents and businesses that have implemented sustainable practices, such as those listed in other focus areas of this Plan.
4. Ensure sustainability is considered in decision-making processes by the City of Stoughton, including the city budget process.
5. Support high quality of life through promotion of wellness activities, healthy local food, safe walking and bicycling, and reduction in environmental toxins.

For the complete list of comments from the public collected at the 9/21 dialogue, see HERE.

**What aspects of the vision and goals that the Sustainability Committee presented appeal to you? What aspects do you find potentially problematic?**

*Supportive/Positive:* Participants strongly supported several aspects of the vision and goal statements. Participants appreciated that the vision statement emphasizes that there is opportunity to increase sustainability across age demographics. Participants also indicated that they appreciated that all sectors of the community (government, business, community) were included in advancing actions. Businesses need to be at the forefront of sustainable practices. Participants want to see the City of Stoughton as a role model for residents and for other communities. All sectors can demonstrate how to be more sustainable and can set baseline standards for operations, events, and sustainable living.

*Questions and concerns:* While the word 'residents' is in the vision statement, one participant indicated that the word 'neighbors' is missing. Likewise, the vision and goals are inward-facing; as such, they do not communicate to those outside Stoughton (other communities, visitors) the need and expectation that these practices will be honored and followed.

The primary concern voiced regarding the vision and goal statements was regarding whether they are feasible. Actions taken must be realistic and achievable. There is a cost to making change happen, and

any initiative needs to be cost effective. Implementation of actions will require leadership and personnel - does the City have funds to implement these recommendations? Reaching out to all ages of students with sustainability education and actions will require resources from the school district. To achieve all that is set out in the goals, there may be a need to provide either incentives or policies that lead to desired actions.

An additional concern regards public acceptance of lifestyle changes and how to motivate residents to make necessary changes in their own practices (such as recycling and composting, low energy living, reduction in consumerism).

### What educational and program opportunities would support efforts to empower residents to make sustainable choices?

Participants shared ideas about programs that would increase household and community sustainability efforts. These ideas included both process considerations and specific areas for action. Process considerations identified included education programs; city, business and community organization leadership and modeling of sustainable practices; policy initiatives; engaging youth; and connecting residents.Specific areas for action included local food, pedestrian safety, plastic bans, recycling, composting, water conservation, rain barrels and rain gardens, tree planting, vermiculture, and waste reduction. Specific ideas are detailed below.

*Educational Opportunities*: To make change easy, residents need to be given the knowledge and the resources to change behavior. Providing knowledge through educational programming is the first step across all generations. The Sustainability Committee (in partnership with nonprofit organizations and educational institutions) could provide free classes on how to engage sustainability at the household level (for all the areas of action mentioned above). For community events that are encouraging recycling and zero waste, the public should be provided with educational resources about why this is being done, and how to promote these practices.

*Advancing Solutions- Modeling sustainable practices:* City, business, and community organizations should lead through modeling of sustainable practices. Businesses that initiate or expand sustainable practices set an example and introduce options to other businesses. Participants felt that it is important to recognize sustainable businesses publicly, to encourage other businesses to try new ideas and practices. Community organizations should also model internal sustainability practices while also supporting community through their sustainability efforts .A specific suggestion for the City (perhaps in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and nonprofit organizations) is the development of an information packet for new families, new businesses, and visitors with information about Stoughton's sustainability plan and ongoing initiatives.

*Advancing Solutions- Policy Initiatives:* While some changes can be adopted easily, other practices may be too widespread, ingrained, or costly to implement without policy incentives or mandates. Policy opportunities mentioned specifically included a ban on single use plastics and requirements for recycling and composting at local events. Businesses can also be mandated to reduce waste and recycle products that they sell.

*Fostering Community Leadership- Engaging Youth*: Participants were especially inspired by youth participation and encouraging of efforts to increase youth actions toward sustainability. Partnerships with

the school district and environmental clubs would provide opportunities for youth to implement sustainability practices within the school (reducing food waste, sustainable food choices, creating composting and gardens within school grounds) and within the community (working with the Downtown business community, planting trees, donating produce to the food pantry).

*Fostering Community Leadership- Connecting Residents:* There was quite a bit of discussion about the importance of personal connections and presence in sharing information and motivation to live sustainably. Connections can be within an aged demographic (seniors getting together to share ideas) or across generations (senior/youth activities).

## How could the City or sustainability organizations work to build collaboration and connections among citizens, businesses, schools, government, and nonprofit organizations to promote sustainability awareness and engagement?

*Educational Opportunities*: Opportunities for hands-on learning would encourage residents to repurpose items (perhaps at the proposed Innovation Center Stoughton) (composting and sewing were mentioned specifically).

*Collaboration and Partnerships*: There is a great deal of room for collaboration between and among the City, the School District, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Business Association, and nonprofit organizations in promoting sustainability awareness and engagement.

Schools would be a great locus for initiating sustainability actions. Support from the community and school board, and student engagement in reducing, reusing, repurposing, recycling, and composting, would provide valuable education and practice that then can be shared throughout the community. One participant proposed a school referendum that would couple school renovations with increasing opportunities for recycling, composting, and trash reduction.

Stoughton already has very popular community events, such as Syttende Mai. A great starting point for the community would be to engage all entities mentioned above to make this event sustainable. As Syttende Mai attracts visitors from near and far, this would also serve to have Stoughton set an example for other communities.

## How can residents continue to be involved in decision making about sustainability initiatives of the City, including the City budget?

*Advancing Solutions*: Participants encouraged the City Sustainability Committee to continue to report on the progress being made by the committee (through media, social media, events). Residents want continuing input on initiatives. The committee was encouraged to provide incentives for individuals, households, and businesses to set and meet personal challenges and goals (including a recognition program). The committee was also tasked with researching what other communities are doing, in order to identify initiatives appropriate for Stoughton.

*Reducing Barriers:* Engage youth in deliberation and decision-making! Youth are not able to vote, so they need to have a voice in decision-making bodies. Students (especially members of environmental clubs) can be involved in the Sustainability Committee, and can serve to advertise committee events at the

schools. High School students from the Environmental Club can encourage youth participation by creating opportunities for middle school and elementary aged students to get involved in clubs or sustainability activities.