



{ BUILDING A BETTER GRINNELL }
{ 2012 SURVEY RESULTS }

INTRODUCTION: Grinnell, rightfully called the “Jewel of the Prairie,” is a vibrant, small community in the middle of Iowa. It is a rural community that is home to Grinnell College, one of the most diverse liberal arts colleges in the United States. With a population of 9,265 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), Grinnell has much to offer its residents. It boasts eleven parks, three swimming pools, a beautiful downtown, a historical museum, and an art gallery, in addition to a plethora of opportunities to attend multi-cultural events, symposiums, and theater and musical performances at Grinnell College. The Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce in September 2012 reported a positive job growth of 5.94% for the past twelve months¹. This positive job outlook exceeds any of Grinnell’s peer communities in Iowa.

Several times, Grinnell has been nominated and selected as one of the best places to live in the United States. Grinnell has been named “One of the Best College Towns in North

America” (MSN, 2012), “#3 Coolest Small Towns in America” (Budget Travel Magazine, 2009) and “#1 Small City in the Nation to Live in or Relocate to” (Relocate America, 2010). Numbers suggest that Grinnell is one of the best communities to live in the nation. But, what do the residents of Grinnell think? What are their opinions on various issues that concern their living and working in Grinnell? What areas need improvement? Seeking answers to these questions, the Build a Better Grinnell Task Force was formed in September 2011. This group of representatives from across the community worked diligently to create a thorough assessment of Grinnell, and through eight different surveys targeted at different pockets of the population, they garnered responses on Grinnell’s demographics, opinions about quality of life in Grinnell as well as specific project ideas, and their open ended comments. The findings are summarized in this report.

¹Grinnell had 5.94% job growth last year according to Sperling’s Best Places. <http://www.bestplaces.net/economy/zip-code/iowa/grinnell/50112>

MISSION STATEMENT: Through this community survey, the Build A Better Grinnell Task Force aims to help residents and community leaders make informed decisions about community, economic, social service, educational and philanthropic development that will shape the future of Grinnell for the better.

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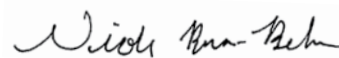
OPENING REMARKS: After 14 months of work on the Better Grinnell Assessment I am so pleased to say the results are in. If you are a member of the Build a Better Grinnell Task Force, thank you for your commitment this past year. If you are a representative of an agency whose mission is to improve the lives of Grinnellians, thank you for the meaningful work you do. If you are a community member who took part in the first phase of self-guided focus groups or took a survey, thank you for your time and opinions. Whatever your connection, your responses **WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE OF GRINNELL**. My hope is that this report will be a future planning guide for community groups and non-profits.

Better Grinnell has been a fascinating study of what makes Grinnell such a wonderful place, while also identifying areas of improvement. We recognized the importance of giving all Grinnellians a voice in community planning. Certain sectors were not represented in the large random community survey, so great effort was made to include residents from all socioeconomic and all age groups. We oversampled various populations in Grinnell, and those smaller samples were then compared to the larger random survey to find similarities and differences.

It was a pleasure for the Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation to help coordinate the efforts of the Task Force with the Claude W. & Dolly Ahrens Foundation. Community foundations across the country are known as unbiased conveners of community groups around topics that are important to community development. The Task Force itself is represented by a diverse group of community leaders, including Monica Chavez-Silva—Grinnell College; Kay Cmelik—City of Grinnell; Julie Gosselink—Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation; Angela

Harrington—Grinnell Chamber of Commerce; Patty Hinrichs—Poweshiek County Public Health; Cory Jackson—Grinnell Regional Medical Center; Jen Jacobsen—Grinnell College; Theresa Petersen—Grinnell Police Department; Rachel Porath—MICA; Sarah Smith—Imagine Grinnell; and Liz Queathem—Grinnell College. The major work of the self-guided focus groups and surveys was made possible by several extremely bright young people, including Grinnell College student apprentices Anna-Lisa Bowans, Maddie Gardner and Ami Shrestha, and Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation AmeriCorps VISTA Lucy Thoms. Dr. Kent McClelland, Grinnell College Senior Professor of Sociology, was also instrumental in the survey design and data management. I am amazed by the intelligence and creativity of this group. The effect of the assessment will be felt for many years to come thus making a **BETTER GRINNELL** for all.

In appreciation,



Nicole Brua-Behrens
Greater Poweshiek Community
Foundation Program Coordinator

THE SURVEY SAMPLE: SURVEY SAMPLE MIMICS GRINNELL'S POPULATION

Grinnell prides itself on a small population size of 9,265 persons. The sample of 1,066 respondents comprises 12.9% of the targeted population (residents aged 10 & over). About twenty percent of the town's residents are 18 years of age or younger and another twenty percent are aged 65 or older (Grinnell Blue Zones Application, 2012). Different groups were sampled, such as high school students, middle school students, and college students in addition to the general community in order to obtain a representative sample from the population. **Figure 1** indicates that the age distribution of our aggregate sample² mirrors the age-distribution of the town of Grinnell.

Grinnell College, with 1,615 students from almost every state in the nation and over fifty different countries, adds diversity to the town of Grinnell. Responses were obtained from 228 college students and 157 college staff and faculty. A large number of Grinnell College faculty and staff in-commute to Grinnell every day. According to the Grinnell Housing Market Assessment, 2,736 people commuted more than ten miles to Grinnell for work in 2010 (2012). Between 50 and 65 percent of employees from large employers do not live in this zip code (50112). Grinnell College (roughly 642 total employees), Grinnell Regional Medical Center (440) and Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company (approximately 575) are the three major employers in Grinnell. Because of the large number of in-commuters, people who in-commute to Grinnell regularly for work were surveyed. Manufacturing, education, health care, and social services make up 55% of jobs (Grinnell Blue Zones Application, 2012). **Figure 2** presents the employment distribution of the sample.

Despite a positive job outlook in the past year, Grinnell still faces unemployment and poverty. The U.S. Census Bureau of 2010 estimates that 6.5% of people in Grinnell are unemployed and 16.9% (excluding people living in

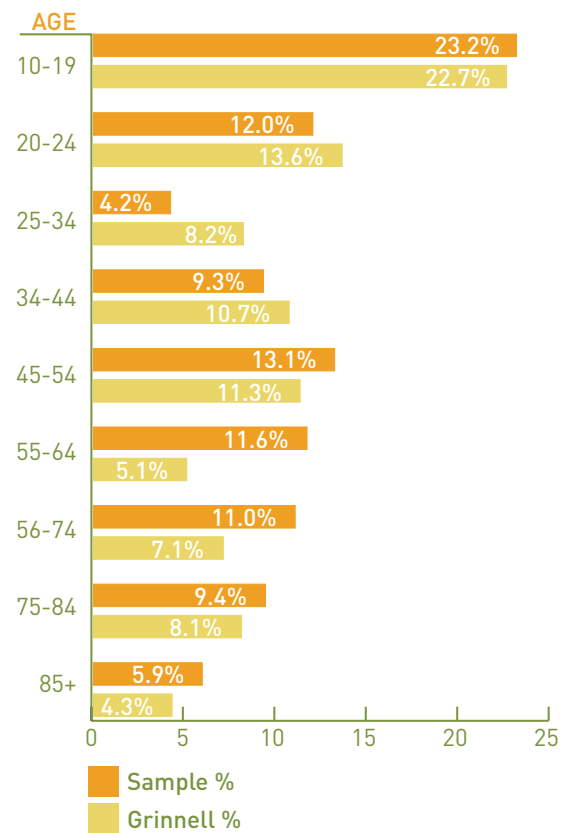


FIGURE 1: Age Distribution

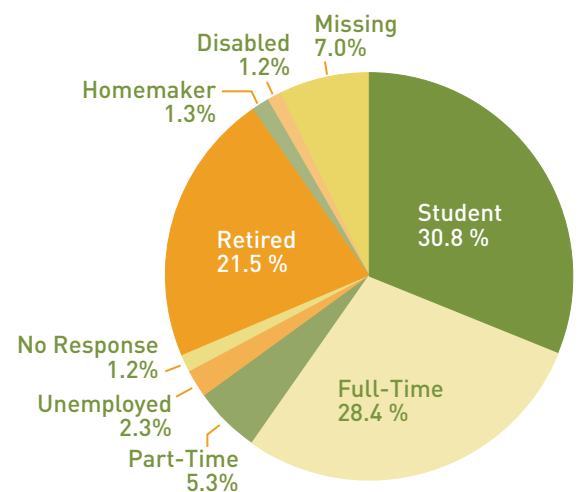


FIGURE 2: Employment Distribution of the Sample

nursing homes and dorms) live in poverty. These numbers compare to 6.0% and 12.5% respectively for the state of Iowa in 2010. In addition, 35.8% of K-12 students in the Grinnell-Newburg School District in 2012 are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Restricting numbers to students in the elementary schools, 41.9% are eligible for free and reduced lunch. In hope of capturing the socioeconomic variation in Grinnell,

low-income beneficiaries of MICA (Mid-Iowa Community Action) were also surveyed.

The highest percentage of respondents (about 35%) reported living in Grinnell for more than 20 years, whereas 7.5% have lived in Grinnell for less than one year. About 46% of the entire sample³ reported biking or walking as their primary modes of transportation.

{ METHODOLOGY }

1 HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED:

PHASE ONE: BETTER GRINNELL TOOL KITS COMPLETED BY SOME 39 FOCUS GROUPS

The tool kit concept used for the Better Grinnell project was borrowed from the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. The Better Grinnell tool kit is a user-friendly document that includes instructions for anyone to perform a self-guided focus group no matter the level of experience with traditional focus groups⁴. The tool kit was distributed via email blasts from a variety of entities including social service agencies, the Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce, Grinnell College and Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation. Paper copies of the

survey were also placed at public venues including the Grinnell City Hall, Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce, Drake Community Library, a local coffee shop and the Grinnell College mailroom. Some 39 tool kits were returned to the Better Grinnell Task Force during the months of February and March 2012. Returned tool kits were tabulated and responses were coded into broad themes that were used to formulate questions for the next project phase, the community survey.

³Excluding the in-commuters.

⁴Focus group is a small number of people meeting to record their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards an idea or product.

2 PHASE TWO: RANDOM COMMUNITY SURVEY THROUGH TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

An online survey was prepared in Survey Monkey⁵ using the data collected from the completed tool kits. Eleven high school students and three Grinnell College students were hired through the Grinnell College Office for Community Enhancement and Engagement to interview Grinnell residents by telephone. The survey calls were made in the last two weeks of June to residential numbers from the Grinnell-Newburg Home Pages Phone Book. The numbers were typed into an Excel spreadsheet and the final list of 2,863 numbers was shuffled into random order multiple times and then printed. As callers conducted surveys, they entered the responses directly into Survey Monkey. In total, callers received 447 valid responses from the 2,863 households they tried to reach. This amounts to a response rate of 15.6%.

However, only 478 calls went through, out of which 447 respondents were willing and able to complete the surveys. This approximates to a response rate of 93.5%.



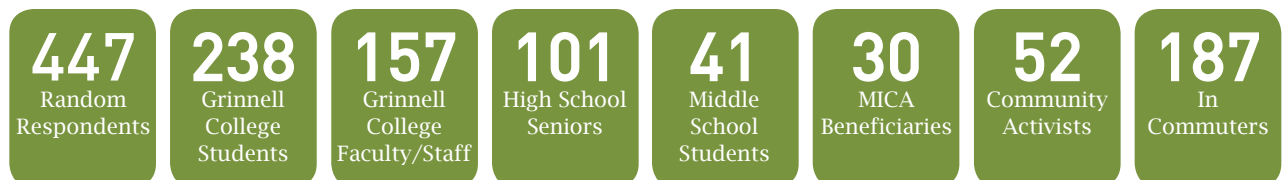
3 PHASE THREE: OVERSAMPLING POPULATION SUBGROUPS UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE RANDOM SURVEY

Following the random telephone survey, some population subgroups were oversampled in order to get representative data from key groups of interest. Consequently, online surveys were sent to Grinnell College students, Grinnell College staff and faculty, high school students, middle school students, and people who in-commute to Grinnell for

work regularly. Also, the Chamber as well as other available email blasts were used to gather responses from any other residents who might not have been reached yet. In addition, the surveyors made several visits to MICA in September and October to interview clients of MICA⁶.

Responses were split between respondents living within the 50112 zip code and respondents who in-commute and are reported separately.

SNAPSHOT: AGGREGATE SAMPLE



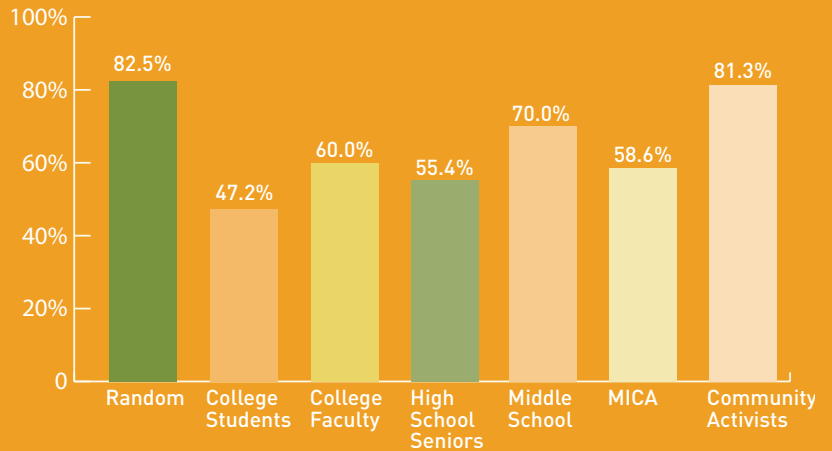
⁶MICA (Mid-Iowa Community Action) is a nonprofit organization serving children and families affected by poverty.

⁷Community activists are the respondents who care enough about the community to volunteer to take a survey in response to email blasts from the Chamber of Commerce and Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation.

ATTITUDE ABOUT LIVING IN GRINNELL: GRINNELL RESIDENTS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPRESSION OF THE TOWN

Respondents were asked to rate their attitudes about living in Grinnell on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most positive. The average ratings for different subgroups in Table 1 indicates that Grinnell residents have a strongly positive impression of the town. The averages for subgroups range from 8.7 for the community activists to 7.2 for the college and high school students. Figure 3 suggests that more than 45% of respondents across all subgroups rated living in Grinnell as an 8, 9 or 10. The figure also highlights noteworthy differences between subgroups in their attitude towards living in Grinnell.

FIGURE 3: Living in Grinnell rated as an 8, 9 or 10



	Random	College Students	College Faculty	High School Seniors	Middle School	MICA	Community Activists
Average Rating	8.5	7.2	7.6	7.2	8.05	7.59	8.71

TABLE 1: Subgroup Differences
Average Ratings for Attitude About Living in Grinnell

{ ATTITUDE }

OPINIONS ABOUT QUALITY OF LIFE IN GRINNELL:

While the ratings indicate a positive outlook towards Grinnell, the survey also inquired about residents' opinions on broad community issues. Consequently, respondents were asked about 28 different aspects of quality of life in Grinnell, such as: cost of living, city

services, entertainment and retail options, health, education, transportation, and so on. The responses in this section were limited to "Grinnell is doing a good job," "Grinnell needs to improve," and "don't know/don't care."



{ QUALITY OF LIFE }



“DOING A GOOD JOB”: GRINNELL IS DOING A GREAT JOB AT 9 OUT OF 28 CATEGORIES

In nine out of 28 categories, more than 50% of survey respondents across all of the sample groups indicated that “Grinnell is doing a good job.” There was a wide consensus across the different sample groups that Grinnell is doing a good job in **promoting community spirit, maintaining fine community appearance, organizing community events, maintaining involvement of Grinnell College, offering adequate number of restaurants to choose from, providing city services, as well as sports facilities, arts & cultural opportunities, and parks & recreational opportunities.** The number of community topics that received affirmative responses across the sample increased to 11 out of 28 categories when groups that were less concerned about the aspect in question were excluded. For instance, about 44% of middle school students did not know or care about cost of living in Grinnell, and about 35% of Grinnell College students did not know or care about medical, dental and mental health

services. Excluding these less involved groups, the categories cost of living, and health services received approval from more than half of respondents across the sample.

KEY SUBGROUP DIFFERENCES

Some categories are worth highlighting, as they received approval from most groups with the exception of few. **Figure 4** indicates that the majority of college faculty and staff do not think that Grinnell is doing a good job in welcoming newcomers, or people of all backgrounds. Conversely, most respondents in other groups tend to think otherwise. Entertainment options tend to score low for college students, college faculty and staff, and high school students, but not for other groups. Moreover, college, high school and middle school students do not think that there are adequate ways to find out about things happening in and around town. Additionally, college students do not think that downtown stores have convenient hours for them.

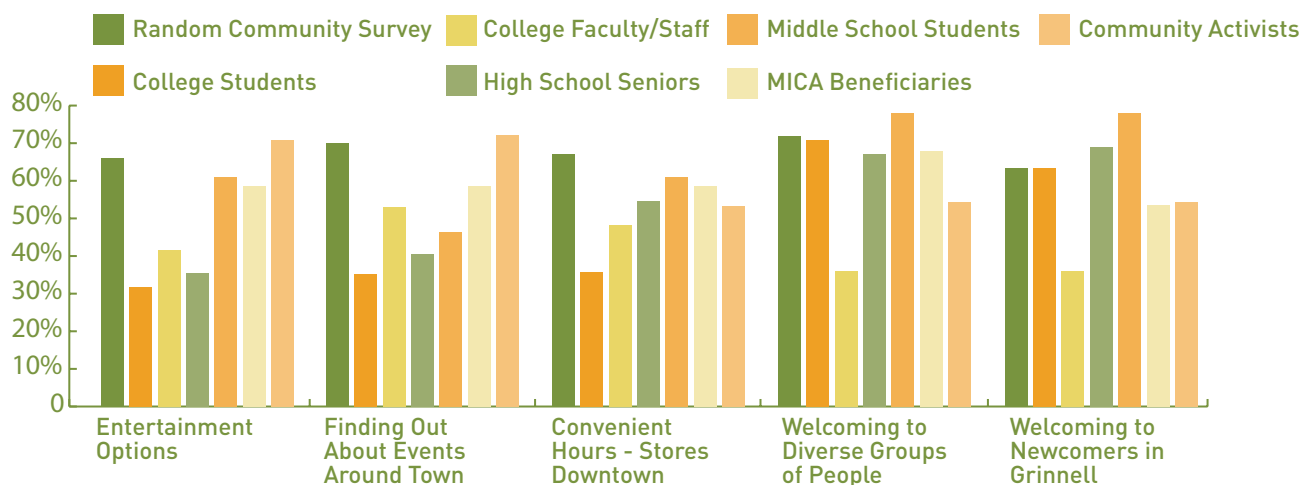


FIGURE 4: Key Subgroup Differences In Categories Receiving Approval

“NEEDS TO IMPROVE”: SOME CATEGORIES NEED IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

Grinnell is doing well in several categories, but there is room for improvement in several others. The majority of respondents across the groups indicated that Grinnell needs to **offer more places to buy new clothes**. More than 80% of respondents in the random community sample, non-random community sample, and the sample of college faculty and staff remarked that Grinnell needs to increase the number of places to buy new clothes. Also, the interest is high for the various student groups. Fully 75% of high school seniors, 70% of college students, and 66% of middle school students emphasize the need to improve places to buy new clothes. A substantial portion of the respondents who indicated a need for improvement thought it a high priority to enhance options for buying new clothes.

{ IMPROVEMENT }

Similarly, **improving places for teenagers to hang out** might warrant immediate attention, since respondents across most samples believe that it should be a high priority for improvement. Interestingly, only 39% of random survey respondents remarked that Grinnell needs to increase places for teenagers to hang out. A closer scrutiny suggests that the number is affected by the large fraction of people over 65, who instead note that they “don’t know/don’t care” about the issue. Restricting the random sample to those 65 and under indicates that 58% of the constrained sample stated that Grinnell needs to expand places for teenagers to hang out. The prominence of this issue is the most apparent in the responses from high school

seniors. About 70% of the high school seniors maintained that Grinnell needs to expand places for teenagers to hang out, with about half of them stressing that it should be the town’s top priority for improvement and the other half saying that it should be a medium priority. Only 15% said that Grinnell is doing a good job regarding this issue; the rest opted for “don’t know/don’t care.”

Likewise, respondents in all groups stress that Grinnell ought to offer more transportation for getting around town, as well as out of town, for those without a car. Notably, 70% (140) of college students insist that Grinnell **needs to improve transportation for getting out of town for those without a car**.

The need for more out-of-town and around town transportation is also echoed in other samples. Some 54% of the random sample and 55% of Grinnell College faculty and staff indicated the necessity of improvement of transportation options. These responses are underscored by the popularity of a passenger rail and a public transportation system among respondents (see **Specific Project Ideas** on page 11).

.....
Most respondents stress that Grinnell ought to offer more transportation for getting around town, as well as out of town.

Also of note, in responding to “transportation out of town if you don’t have a car,” very few respondents answered that Grinnell is doing well. Rather, many of the votes went to “don’t know or don’t care.” This high percentage of respondents not knowing or not caring about transportation likely stems from the fact that much of Grinnell’s population depends upon their own car for transportation, as reflected across the sample groups (excluding college students), with approximately 95% having personal or family access to a car on a regular basis. In contrast, only 18% of college students sampled have access to a car on a regular basis.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUBGROUPS

Different groups stress different categories that necessitate consideration for betterment. High school students as well as Grinnell College students, faculty and staff underscore entertainment options as demanding improvement. Some 50% of MICA beneficiaries believe that Grinnell needs better career resources, including job listing and job coaching. College faculty and staff strongly feel that Grinnell needs to be more welcoming to newcomers, and especially welcoming to diverse groups of people. The majority of them (more than 65%) think that it needs to be a high priority for improvement. Similarly, a significant portion of college faculty and staff, as well as the non-random community survey, remark that Grinnell needs to provide high quality, affordable housing for sale and for rent. **Figure 5** highlights some of the categories that call for attention.

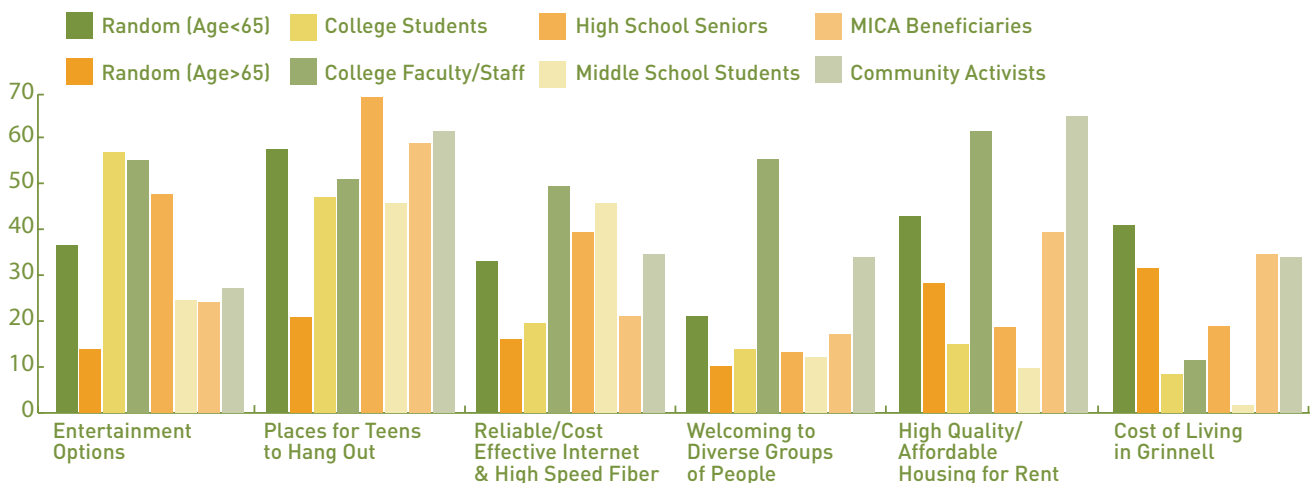


FIGURE 5: Key Subgroup Differences In Categories Needing Improvement

“DON’T KNOW/DON’T CARE”: RESPONSES SHOW VARIABILITY AMONG GROUPS

Information on the “don’t know/don’t care” option answers questions raised by the other two aforementioned categories and underscores some discounted issues. Data indicates that a significant portion of

respondents, except MICA beneficiaries, said that they “don’t know or don’t care” about services and support for lower income residents, and career resources.

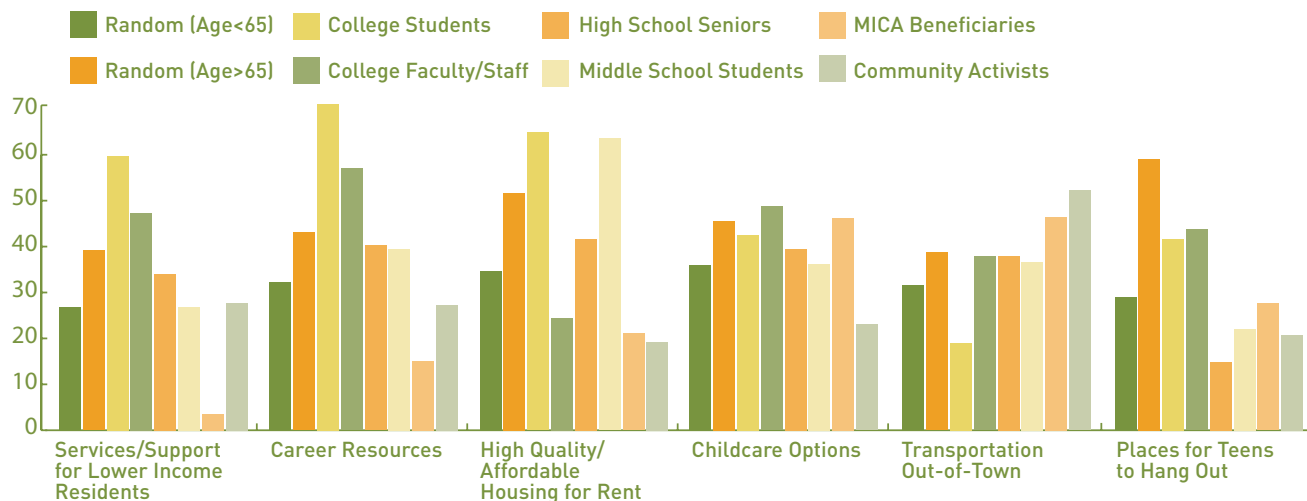


FIGURE 6: Subgroup Differences in Categories Respondents Don’t Know or Don’t Care About

The numbers are especially high for college students and college faculty (refer to Figure 6). Likewise, a considerable number of respondents, except for the college students, “don’t know or don’t care” about transportation for getting around or out of town if one doesn’t have a car. Furthermore, many respondents across the groups indicated that they “don’t know or don’t care” about childcare options.

The high proportion of respondents in the “don’t know/don’t care” category call for a careful analysis of responses and conclusions. Therefore, Grinnell might consider prioritizing categories such as providing career resources and offering high quality, affordable housing for sale and rent. The need for high quality, affordable housing for sale and rent is

echoed by Grinnell College faculty and staff, in addition to the community activists. The commonalities between these two groups are that most of the respondents are full time employees with bachelor’s degree or higher, and are between the ages of 26 and 65. Furthermore, random survey respondents aged below 65 also echo the necessity for high quality, affordable housing for sale as well as rent. Undoubtedly, these three groups make up the market for high quality, affordable housing for sale as well as rent. In addition, these three groups affirm the need for reliable and cost-effective internet and high speed fiber. About 50% of college faculty and staff, 36% of community activists and 35% of random community members aged below 65 stress this need.

OPINIONS ON SPECIFIC PROJECT IDEAS FOR IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC RESTROOM DOWNTOWN, PASSENGER RAIL & PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOR ACCESS OUT-OF-TOWN

In addition to garnering responses on broad community issues, respondents were asked for their opinions on 24 specific project ideas. These project ideas had previously been proposed by residents in Build a Better Grinnell toolkits. Respondents were asked to comment if they would like to see the project, if they would not like to see it, or if they had no opinion on the project in question. These responses help to confirm the popularity of some of these ideas with the general public and highlight the priorities of the Grinnell population. Several projects received very high approval rating from the respondents.

The three most popular project ideas are 1) public restroom downtown, 2) passenger rail through Des Moines and Iowa City, and 3) a public transportation system for access to out-of-town services and recreation. All three of these received approval from more than 60% of respondents across all samples. A public restroom downtown is the most popular idea among respondents aged 25 and older.

More than 80% of the random community survey, non-random community survey, and MICA beneficiaries would like to see a public restroom downtown. College faculty and staff trail behind with 69% approval.

Similarly, passenger rail is another very popular idea, especially among college students. Ninety-three percent of college students, 86% of college faculty and staff, and 84% of the random community survey respondents would like to see passenger rail through Des Moines and Iowa City. Likewise, an out-of-town public transportation system is also very popular. Ninety one percent of college students and 86% of MICA beneficiaries would like to see out of town public transportation. In contrast, the project idea for in-town public transportation seemed less popular. Though 82% of MICA beneficiaries and 66% of college students expressed that they would like to see in-town public transportation, a smaller proportion of respondents in other samples showed interest (refer to **Figure 7**).

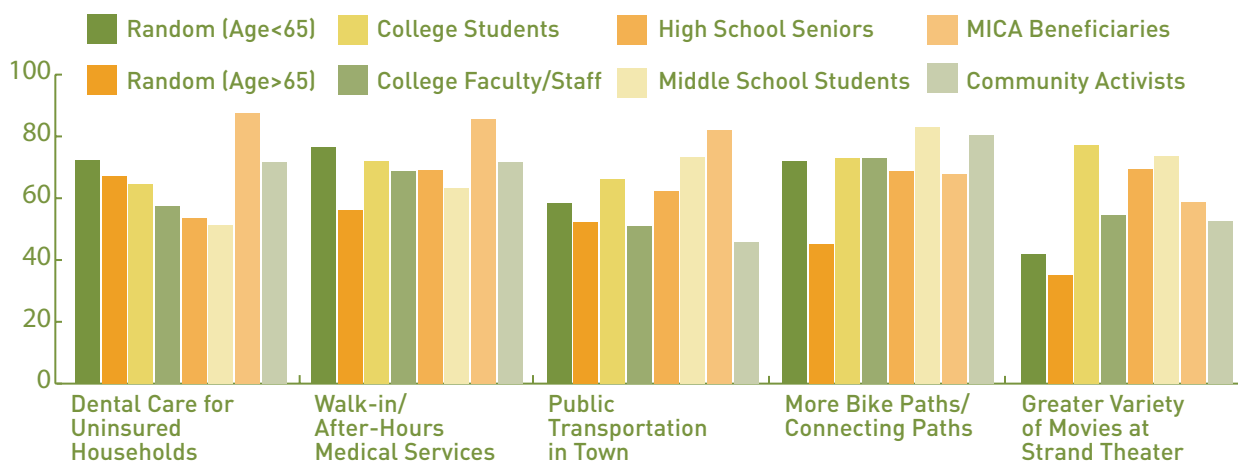


FIGURE 7: Key Subgroup Differences In Projects Respondents Would Like to See

OPINIONS ON SPECIFIC PROJECT IDEAS FOR IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY: CONT.

Other popular project ideas include more enforcement of city codes that require people to keep up rentals, restoration of downtown buildings, a downtown drug store, walk-in/after-hours medical services, ice skating or roller skating rink, dental care for uninsured households, a bigger farmer's market, offering temporary housing and other services for homeless individuals, more bike paths, more sidewalks, and more enforcement of city codes that require people to keep up their own homes. More bike paths and sidewalks are mostly popular among middle school students and the community activists. Enforcement of city codes on residential property upkeep is called for by all groups other than the student groups. Furthermore, the need for dental care for under-insured households is emphasized by 89% of MICA beneficiaries, with substantial approval from other sample groups too. A similar pattern is apparent in the responses for the project idea to offer temporary housing and other services for homeless individuals.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUBGROUPS

Some projects are popular among some sample groups but not others. Greater variety of movies screened at the Strand Theater is called for by 77% college students, 70% high school students and 73% middle school students but not by random community respondents (only 38%). Similarly, 68% of community activists would like to see a place to house out-of-town conferences, meetings and larger events when schools are in session and their facilities cannot be used. More than 60% of high school students and MICA beneficiaries would like to see a game center or arcade in town.

The three least popular projects are a new middle school, a downtown hotel, and a new K-8 school that is within walking or biking distance for school children. Only 46% of middle school students and 34% of high school students said that they would like to see a new middle school. A new K-8 school received even less support from most groups.

TOP 10 POPULAR PROJECTS:

- 1 Public restroom downtown
- 2 Passenger Rail Through Des Moines & Iowa City
- 3 Public Transportation System for access to out of town services & recreation
- 4 Enforcement of city codes on residential property upkeep
- 5 Restoration of downtown buildings
- 6 Downtown drug store
- 7 Walk-in/after-hours medical services
- 8 Ice skating or roller skating rink
- 9 Dental care for uninsured
- 10 More bike paths and sidewalks

IN-COMMUTERS: LESS INTERESTED IN GRINNELL ISSUES

A significant portion of Grinnell's labor force commutes to Grinnell regularly. The Better Grinnell Community Survey was modified and emailed to in-commuters employed at three large employers in town: Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company, Grinnell College and Grinnell Regional Medical Center. While the number of total in-commuters to Grinnell adds up to about 2,700, our sample consists of 187 respondents. A considerable portion of the respondents (26%) have worked in Grinnell

for more than 20 years. Most of them (64%) reported **spouse's employment** of the reasons for not living in Grinnell in spite of their jobs. The other two significant reasons appear to be kids at school elsewhere (42%) and lack of appropriate housing to buy (22%). However, there doesn't seem much interest in living in Grinnell even if those issues are addressed (refer to **Figure 8**). Nevertheless, the attitude about working in Grinnell appears to be positive and the ratings average to 7.8 for this sample.

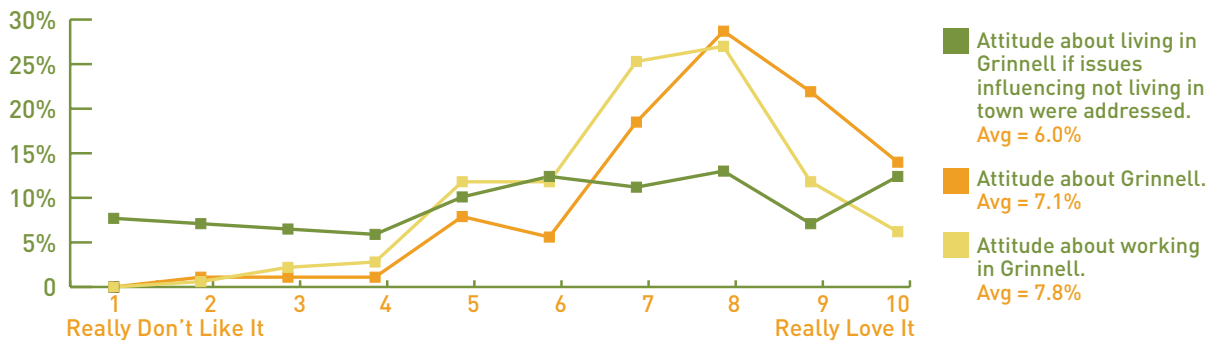


FIGURE 8: In-commuters' Attitude About Grinnell

In the next part of the survey, in-commuters were asked about the 28 broad community topics identical to those asked to the respondents residing in the Grinnell area. Most in-commuters responded that **they did not know or care about most of the issues**. Nevertheless, the largest percentage of the respondents expressed that Grinnell needs to improve its entertainment options and offer more places to buy new clothes (refer to **Figure 9**). On the other hand, the majority said that Grinnell is "Doing a good job" regarding certain topics, such as community events, community appearance, sports facilities, parks and recreational opportunities, and medical, dental and mental health services.

When asked about specific project ideas, most in-commuters expressed no opinion regarding most of the topics. Walk-in/after-hours medical services were deemed necessary by 70% of the in-commuters sampled. Similarly, 63% of the

in-commuters would like to see more attractions right-off the interstate, 58.8% approve passenger rail through Des Moines and Iowa City and 58% would like to see downtown buildings restored. No project idea received outright disapproval as most in-commuters settled with no opinion.

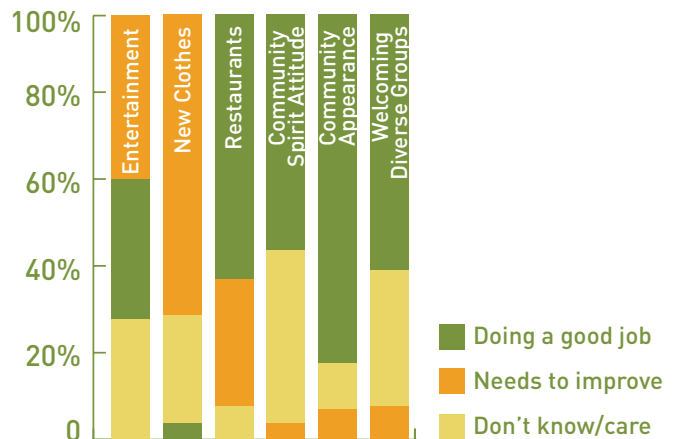


FIGURE 9: In-commuter Responses



OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES: COMMUNITY PERSONALITY, ATTITUDE & LEADERSHIP ARE STRENGTHS OF GRINNELL

Towards the end of the survey, respondents in all groups were asked open-ended questions in order to get a better sense of what specific areas or ideas were most important to them. Respondents were asked to share about what stands out in Grinnell as a place to live and what they thought were Grinnell's top areas for improvement.

.....
One of the most positive conclusions is that Grinnell seems to be doing a very good job in terms of community personality, attitude, and leadership.
.....

Sixty-five percent of Grinnell College students and 45% of faculty had encouraging things to say, as did 56% of the random survey and 47% of the community activists. **Good community appearance** was also acknowledged frequently, and many individuals stated that they appreciate Grinnell's efforts when it comes to community activities and events, such as Music in the Park, Grinnell Games, and other various cultural and recreational opportunities.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

There were also several areas that respondents consider to be critical areas of improvement. **Better and more affordable housing and rental options** are an imperative for in-commuters,

{ COMMUNITY PERSONALITY }

community activists, and college faculty. A lack of transportation options was mentioned by 38% of college students, but did not seem to be a top priority for other groups. Many individuals made comments about Grinnell's retail market, especially in regard to the **lack of clothing stores and variety in restaurants.**

It is also interesting to note that several people commented on the extent of development needed in relation to the size of Grinnell. One respondent said, "Grinnell is not a city and that's one of the great things about it. There is a different pace of life here. I would like to see improvements and conveniences like

those found in a city without compromising the distinctiveness of Grinnell and what Grinnell already has to offer." Another person said that they would like to see a focus on the things that make a small town attractive, such as walkability and being bike-friendly, community spirit, and safety, and not on making Grinnell a retail hub. Another thought that retail development near the interstate was fine, but that **downtown should maintain its uniqueness.** Yet there were just as many respondents who want more retail options, including places such as Target, Chipotle, Applebees, and Kohls.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS BY PROFESSOR KENT MCCLELLAND:

As a longtime teacher of statistics and quantitative research methods at Grinnell College, I was asked to serve as a technical consultant for the community-survey phase of this project, and I have been impressed with the hard work of the team who put together this survey and by their determination to gather information that will be of real use to the community of Grinnell.

Although the easiest way to gather data from a community would be to send out paper questionnaires to a large sample of people and hope for some scattered responses, this team decided instead to draw a random sample, which involves contacting people chosen by random numbers from a list of community residents—a much more laborious procedure, but one much more likely to yield information that represents the views of the whole community. The team worked hard to write a questionnaire that would be easy and interesting for people to answer, and, after extensive pretesting of the questions, they enlisted high school students to do phone interviews with a random sample of adult Grinnell residents in June, 2012.

Even random samples can have biases, however, and the technique of polling by phone yields fewer people who are working full time than people who often stay home, like retirees. Younger people are also less likely to be using land-line phone service instead of cell phones, and families with children who take summer vacations, as well as people working in education whose jobs are seasonal, may be

out of town in the summertime. So it wasn't a great surprise when the team looked at their results and found that the age of respondents to the phone interviews tended to be older, with about half the sample over the age of 65.

Rather than taking this random sample with its biases as good enough, the survey team made a determined effort to reach groups of people who had been underrepresented in the random phone poll. They spent the autumn contacting and polling groups such as **college students, college faculty and staff, high-school students, middle-school students, clients of Mid-Iowa Community Action, and community leaders and activists who have had a special interest in the topic of the survey.** While none of these other samples was randomly drawn, respondents to these samples came from segments of the community whose voices were not as well represented (or even completely omitted) in the original sample. Finally, to round out their effort to get representation from all segments of the community, the team also contacted some of the large employers in town in order to reach a sample of in-commuters, people who live elsewhere but work in Grinnell.

With data from so many different segments of the community, we can have considerable confidence that the results detailed in this report are a good reflection of the range of views held by community members about the strengths and weaknesses of this community and ways to improve it.



The patient, persistent, and comprehensive efforts of this research team can serve as a model of the right way to undertake a community survey, when your goal is to find out how community members from all walks of life think.

So what do we learn from this survey about how the people of Grinnell view their own community? The most striking finding to emerge from the survey is the overwhelming agreement of all these groups about Grinnell's strong points. Looking at the responses of those who expressed an opinion, **we find that large majorities from every sample say that Grinnell is doing a good job in terms of community spirit, appearance, events, city services, parks, sports facilities, and arts and cultural resources.** Large majorities feel positive about the involvement of Grinnell College in the community. And every community group gives strong positive ratings to Grinnell as a place to live. All of these results are a tribute to the exceptional quality of life in Grinnell, and this strong consensus can be taken as a pat on the

back for the leaders who have spearheaded an impressive range of community-improvement initiatives in recent years.

The consensus across groups extends to opinions about things that might further improve the community. When those without opinions are excluded, majorities of every sample would welcome improvements in transportation, both in and out of town, for people without cars, and most people would like to see additional options for places to buy new clothes. Proposed projects with solid majority support include a public restroom downtown, transportation options like passenger rail and improved public transportation to nearby cities, continued restoration of downtown buildings, a downtown drugstore, and increased access to dental insurance and after-hours medical care.

Findings like these paint a picture of Grinnell as the kind of cohesive community that residents of other parts of the country might imagine had disappeared 50 years ago.

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But the health of a community also depends on its diversity and the extent to which attention is paid to needs and interests of its more marginalized groups, like young people and the less well off.
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A closer examination of some differences between the responses of the different samples suggests some ways that Grinnell can improve the quality of life of all its residents, not just those in the majority.

Perhaps the most marginal group sampled were **Grinnell College students**, who are usually temporary residents of the city and come from all parts of the country and the world. As might be expected of young people arriving from bigger cities, their impression of the entertainment

options in town, such as the selection of movies available, is not so good, and because many of them do not have cars, they seem particularly interested in expanding the transportation options, in and out of town, for shopping trips or entertainment. A finding of particular interest to local merchants is that many students find the downtown shopping hours inconvenient, and they think that the city could do a better job with signage and providing ways to find out what's happening in town. They also like the idea of an expanded farmers' market. All of these results suggest a marketing opportunity for local merchants: to focus more closely on merchandise, store hours, and advertising, possibly by social media, that will appeal to college students.

Another group that was sampled are **Grinnell College faculty and staff**, many of whom, like the students, come to the city from other more urban parts of the country and the world. Results suggest that they think the cost of living in Grinnell is actually pretty reasonable, probably in comparison to places they have lived before, but, like the younger half of the random sample, **they seem particularly concerned about finding affordable and high quality housing here, either for rent or for sale.**

{ FUTURE VIBRANCY }

Moreover, they are not as convinced as the other samples that Grinnell does a good job of welcoming newcomers and diverse groups of people—perhaps considering some of their own experiences of coming to town as young, busy outsiders. Like the college students, they would prefer to see more entertainment options, as well as better resources for finding out what's happening in town. They tend to be more concerned than other groups about the availability of high-speed Internet options, and they are the only group much interested in the possibility of a downtown hotel, perhaps because some commute from other cities and need places to stay when the weather is bad.

High-school and middle-school students, in their status as not-yet-adults, also occupy a somewhat marginal position in town. Some of their concerns relate to entertainment options and things to do in a small town. **Both school groups are strongly in favor of a new ice or roller-skating rink, and both are interested in the possibility of more attractions right**

off the interstate. High-school students are particularly concerned about the lack of places for teenagers to hang out, and they like the idea of a new game center or arcade. Middle-school students, still too young to drive, express concerns about getting around town. The middle school is not well served by bike paths or sidewalks, and these students strongly favor better bike paths, sidewalks, and signage, as well as an in-town bus or trolley service. They also are more likely than other groups to favor construction of new elementary and middle schools.

The **MICA clients** in the survey give voice to the special concerns of low-income residents of the city, who also must be counted as marginal. **Some concerns highlighted in their responses include dental care for families without insurance, walk-in after-hours medical care, temporary housing for the homeless, the availability and upkeep of rental housing, and transportation improvements like an in-town**

trolley service and better traffic enforcement at intersections, since getting around town can be tricky if you're on foot. Like the high-school and middle-school samples, they seem especially concerned about entertainment options for teenagers and finding things in town for them to do. One particularly interesting result to emerge from the data is that MICA clients are far more likely than other samples to say that Grinnell is doing a good job of providing services and support for lower-income residents—no doubt a tribute, in large part, to the work of the MICA organization itself.

The responses of the sample of in-commuters are worth some special attention. Rural towns the size of Grinnell and smaller have been losing population in recent decades, as people have moved to bigger cities and their suburbs.

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Although Grinnell has managed to maintain a population status quo, its future vibrancy may depend on attracting new residents.
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People who work in Grinnell but live elsewhere are possible candidates for relocation, so their impressions of Grinnell as a place to live are important.

Survey results showed that in-commuters have many of the same positive impressions of Grinnell as residents themselves do. They tend toward a strong positive assessment of the city's appearance, sports facilities, parks, community events, community spirit, and health facilities. They have more mixed but, on balance, positive assessments of its range of restaurants, downtown store hours, arts and cultural activities, diversity, schools, and resources for finding out what's happening in town. A majority favor improvements like after-hours walk-in medical facilities, more

attractions off the interstate, passenger rail service, restoration of downtown buildings, a bigger farmer's market, public restrooms, and a downtown drugstore. They express some concerns about Grinnell's entertainment options and places for teenagers to hang out. And like most Grinnell residents, they see a dearth of places to buy new clothes.

Responses to the open-ended questions suggest that many in-commuters are rooted in other communities by spouse's jobs, kids' schools, or family ties, and so are unlikely to consider relocating to Grinnell. But a significant minority may be interested in relocation, and their responses suggest some of the obstacles to attracting them. Some respondents express concern that the cost of living in Grinnell is high, perhaps in comparison to smaller towns in the vicinity, and that affordable housing, either for rent or sale, may not be readily available. They also tend to rate as high priority the need for improvements in these areas of affordability. Thus, an increase in the available housing stock in Grinnell might help to tip the balance for these people to consider relocating.

Finally, some interesting patterns emerge when we look at the responses of the sample who volunteered to take the survey, many of whom may be community leaders and activists, in comparison to the other samples of respondents. **In prioritizing projects for community improvement, this sample of concerned citizens appears to be more enthusiastic than most other groups about enforcement of codes for keeping up homes and rentals, the restoration of downtown buildings, a new conference center,** extension of bike paths and sidewalks, and new elementary and middle schools. All these may be important projects, but these town leaders appear to be out ahead of others on them, and getting the general population behind these ideas may take some selling.

By contrast, the sample of concerned citizens appear to be less enthusiastic than other groups about passenger rail, a new ice or roller rink, temporary housing for the homeless, an expanded farmers' market, in-town bus or trolley service, a downtown hotel, and better traffic regulation at intersections.

As we have seen, many of these project ideas respond to the special concerns of more marginal groups in the community, and community leaders, at least as represented by this sample, might do well to give them a little more consideration.

Overall, the results of this survey confirm that the great majority of Grinnell residents regard their community as an attractive place to live, that Grinnell's leaders have been doing a lot of things right, and that residents strongly support many of the ideas that have been offered for improving the community in years ahead.

TASK FORCE PARTNERS:

CITY OF GRINNELL

Kay Cmelik
City Clerk and Finance Director

CLAUDE W. AND DOLLY AHRENS FOUNDATION

Anna-Lisa Bowans
Grinnell College Student
Apprentice 2011-12

Julie Gosselink
President and CEO

Ami Shrestha
Grinnell College Student
Apprentice 2012-13

GREATER POWESHIEK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Nicole Brua-Behrens
GPCF Program Coordinator

Lucy Thoms
AmeriCorps VISTA
Programs Assistant

GRINNELL AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Angela Harrington
President and CEO

GRINNELL COLLEGE

Monica Chavez-Silva
Director of the Office of
Community Enhancement and
Engagement

Maddie Gardner
Grinnell College Student
Apprentice 2011-12

Jen Jacobsen
Wellness Coordinator

GRINNELL POLICE DEPARTMENT

Theresa Petersen
Captain

GRINNELL REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Patty Hinrichs
Poweshiek County Public Health
Coordinator

Cory Jackson
Director of Health Improvement

IMAGINE GRINNELL

Liz Queathem
Board Member and Grinnell
College Faculty

Sarah Smith
Executive Director

MID-IOWA COMMUNITY ACTION

Rachel Porath
MICA Poweshiek County
Director

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Angie Schultz, Art A La Carte

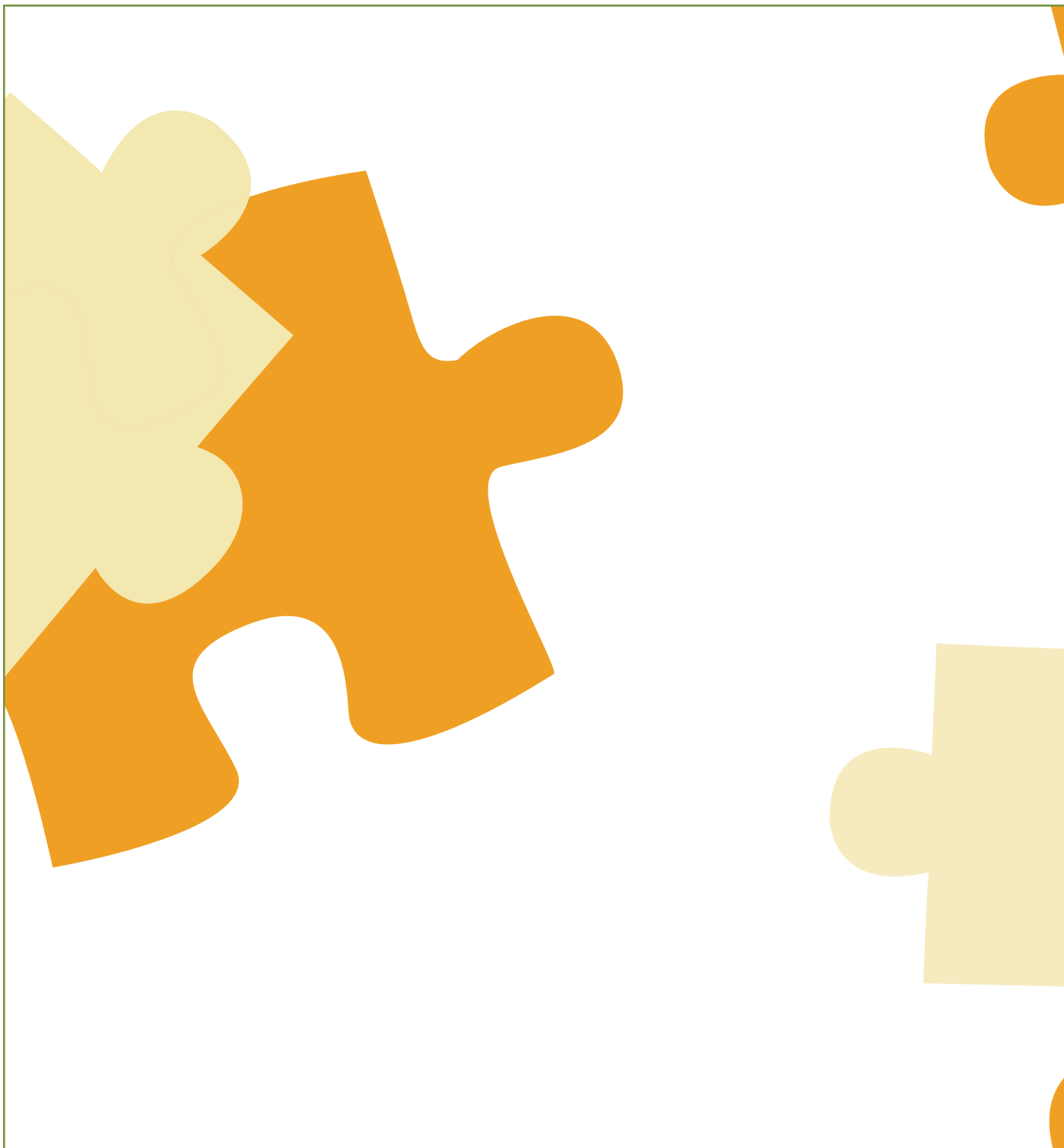
Annie Pigott, Grinnell Corps Fellow 2012-13, Mid-Iowa Community Action

Survey Callers: Marta Andelson, Kathy Andersen, Patrick Armstrong, Cole Baker, Jessa Bidwell,
Drew Cooper, Anna Ivanov, Kristen Moreland, Victor Nagel, Wolfgang Strovers, Annie Zemis

APPENDIX: DATA ON SPECIFIC PROJECT IDEAS

	>80%	60-80%	40-60%	Random	Random (Age <65)	Random (Age >65)	College Students	College Faculty/ Staff	High School Seniors	Middle School Students	MICA Benef.	Community Activists
Public Restroom Downtown	84.8% (363)	84.3% (162)	87.8% (189)	59.1% (117)	68.6% (96)	59.6% (59)	63.4% (26)	88.5% (23)	82.2% (37)			
Passenger Rail Des Moines-Iowa City	84.3% (361)	85.9% (164)	84.0% (189)	92.9% (184)	86.4% (121)	63.6% (63)	56.1% (23)	77.8% (21)	76.1% (35)			
Enforcement of City Codes – Rental Upkeep	77.4% (332)	78.3% (150)	79.5% (172)	33.2% (65)	73.6% (106)	33.3% (33)	17.1% (7)	78.6% (22)	82.6% (38)			
Restore Downtown Buildings	73.6% (315)	78.9% (149)	71.3% (156)	56.6% (111)	71.7% (99)	56.6% (56)	77.5% (31)	65.4% (17)	77.8% (35)			
Downtown Drug Store/ Walgreens	69.6% (297)	65.0% (123)	74.6% (163)	69.9% (137)	53.6% (75)	65.0% (65)	51.2% (21)	66.7% (18)	63.0% (29)			
Dental care for Uninsured Households	67.8% (290)	72.3% (138)	67.0% (146)	64.5% (127)	57.6% (80)	53.6% (52)	51.2% (21)	88.9% (24)	71.7% (33)			
Public Transportation System for Access to Out of Town Services/ Recreation	66.2% (284)	67.9% (130)	66.2% (144)	91.4% (180)	72.9% (102)	61.0% (61)	63.4% (26)	85.7% (24)	65.2% (30)			
Walk-in/After-Hours Medical Services	64.6% (276)	76.6% (144)	56.1% (122)	71.9% (141)	68.8% (97)	69.0% (69)	63.4% (26)	85.7% (24)	71.1% (32)			
Ice Skating Rink/ Roller Skating Rink	64.3% (276)	68.6% (128)	62.9% (140)	58.2% (114)	50.7% (70)	73.0% (73)	77.5% (31)	63.0% (17)	47.8% (22)			
Enforcement of City Codes – Upkeep of Own Home	63.7% (272)	60.3% (116)	66.5% (144)	21.5% (42)	47.9% (67)	43.3% (42)	22.0% (9)	60.7% (17)	65.2% (30)			
Temporary Housing/ Services for Homeless	63.0% (271)	68.1% (130)	63.7% (131)	67.3% (132)	57.9% (81)	51.5% (50)	75.0% (30)	77.8% (21)	50.0% (23)			
Bigger Farmer’s Market – Longer Season/Better Access to Local Food	63.0% (267)	73.8% (138)	54.5% (118)	81.9% (163)	70.7% (99)	60.6% (60)	73.2% (30)	77.8% (21)	56.5% (26)			
More Bike Paths/ Connecting Bike Paths	56.0% (239)	71.9% (137)	45.0% (96)	73.1% (144)	73.0% (105)	68.7% (68)	82.9% (34)	67.9% (19)	80.4% (37)			
More Sidewalks/ Connecting Sidewalks	55.3% (238)	67.0% (127)	47.1% (103)	57.7% (113)	65.0% (91)	61.0% (61)	78.0% (32)	60.7% (17)	73.9% (34)			
More Attractions Right Off Interstate	54.8% (235)	62.7% (120)	50.4% (109)	28.4% (55)	36.9% (52)	65.0% (65)	63.4% (26)	59.3% (16)	54.3% (25)			
Bus/Trolley for In-Town Public Transportation	54.2% (232)	58.4% (112)	52.2% (113)	66.3% (130)	51.1% (71)	62.2% (61)	73.2% (30)	82.1% (23)	45.7% (21)			
Better Directional Signage	50.5% (216)	56.2% (108)	46.9% (101)	57.4% (112)	46.0% (64)	44.4% (44)	63.4% (26)	51.9% (14)	50.0% (23)			
Alternative Facility for Conferences/Meetings/ Events	49.7% (214)	55.7% (106)	48.0% (105)	32.8% (64)	40.4% (57)	46.5% (46)	39.0% (16)	53.6% (15)	67.4% (31)			
Game Center or Arcade	40.9% (175)	50.0% (93)	35.3% (73)	36.2% (71)	26.6% (37)	61.6% (61)	41.5% (17)	65.4% (17)	28.3% (13)			
Downtown Hotel	38.6% (165)	44.9% (88)	35.4% (76)	44.4% (88)	55.1% (76)	44.4% (44)	48.8% (20)	29.6% (8)	31.1% (14)			
Greater Variety of Movies Screened at Strand Theater	38.2% (164)	41.1% (78)	35.6% (78)	77.2% (152)	54.3% (76)	69.7% (69)	73.2% (30)	59.3% (16)	53.3% (24)			
More Traffic Regulation at Busy Intersections (Stop Signs, Stop Lights, Speed Limits, etc.)	34.6% (149)	37.3% (72)	31.1% (67)	23.9% (47)	30.0% (42)	42.9% (42)	43.9% (18)	60.7% (17)	19.6% (9)			
New K-8 School Within Walking or Biking Distance	34.0% (146)	41.3% (78)	29.0% (63)	33.7% (66)	31.2% (44)	34.7% (34)	41.5% (17)	25.9% (7)	45.7% (21)			
New Middle School	19.8% (85)	28.8% (54)	12.4% (27)	18.6% (36)	20.9% (29)	33.7% (33)	46.3% (19)	40.7% (11)	41.3% (19)			

Additional data sets, tool kits, questionnaires and this report will be available online at the following websites:
<http://www.ahrensfamilyfoundation.org/>
<http://www.greaterpcf.org/>



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1510 Penrose Street | Grinnell, IA 50112 | Phone 641.236.5518 | Fax 641.236.5590
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