

WINSTON-SALEM STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Shaping the Strategic Action Plan through community input and collaboration

WHAT IS THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN?

The Imagine Winston-Salem Strategic Action Plan is a community-driven roadmap that will guide future investment, partnerships, and priorities for Winston-Salem’s urban core. The plan explores how destinations, economic development, housing, mobility, and quality-of-place work together to support a vibrant and connected downtown experience.

The plan explores how destinations, economic development, mobility, access, cultural vitality, and downtown activity work together to support a vibrant economy and a high quality of life.

OUR ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The Strategic Action Plan process translates community input and collaboration into clear priorities and actionable strategies for Winston-Salem’s future.



ENGAGEMENT TO DATE

This Engagement Summary highlights the outreach and engagement activities completed to date as part of the Strategic Action Plan process.

The following pages provide a more detailed overview of each effort, key themes that emerged, and how community input is helping shape the plan.

Additional engagement and strategy development will continue as the project moves forward.



ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

A variety of engagement formats and methods were used to hear from the community and ensure diverse voices informed the early stages of the Strategic Action Plan.

Leadership Survey

Gathered input from attendees of the Greater Winston-Salem, Inc. Annual Meeting and the Tourism Development Authority Board on community priorities and opportunities



Advisory Committee

Facilitated an interactive activity with the Advisory Committee focused on strengths, opportunities, and connections

Listening Sessions

Connected with community leaders and organizations to better understand local perspectives

Community Survey

Provided opportunities for residents and stakeholders to share feedback and stay informed online

Opportunities Workshop

Invited participants to share ideas, respond to live polling, and collaborate on opportunities and priorities for the future



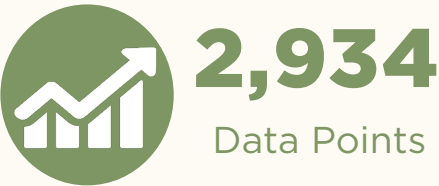
COMMUNITY AT THE CENTER

Your voice is shaping the future of Winston-Salem. Thank you for being part of this important work.

LEADERSHIP SURVEY

The Greater Winston-Salem, Inc (GWSI) and Tourism Development Authority (TDA) Survey provided an early snapshot of how participants perceive Winston-Salem today and where they see opportunities for the future. Responses highlighted a strong appreciation for the City's history, culture, and sense of community, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen connectivity, Downtown activity, and destination experiences.

AT A GLANCE



Platforms: Social Point | **Survey Window:** Nov.4 - Dec. 9, 2025

Distribution: Shared with attendees of the Greater Winston-Salem Annual Meeting and the Tourism Development Authority Board



COMMON THEMES

History and heritage emerged as defining features of Winston-Salem

Participants described Winston-Salem as welcoming, creative and evolving

Downtown remains a major destination, but respondents identified opportunities for stronger connectivity and activation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key themes were identified through one-word prompts, rankings, select-all responses, and open-ended feedback collected during the survey process.

1 Celebrate History, Culture, and Community

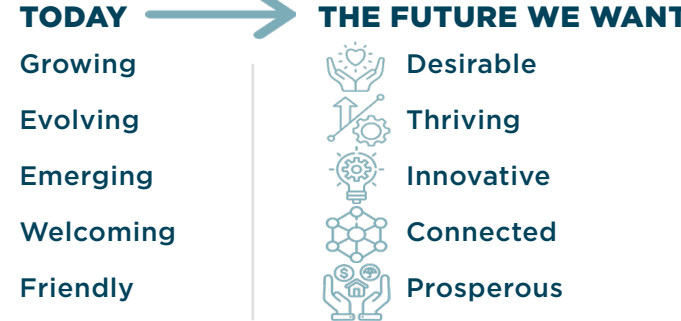
Participants consistently described Winston-Salem as a community defined by its history, heritage, arts, culture, and welcoming character. Authenticity and creativity were also seen as defining strengths.



 People, culture, and arts are at the heart of what makes Winston-Salem unique

2 Embrace Ongoing Change

Respondents frequently described Winston-Salem as a growing and evolving community with strong momentum and opportunity. Safety, inclusivity, affordability, and sustainability are top priorities for the future.



 Respondents see potential for Winston-Salem to be a distinctive destination and a great place to live, work, and visit.

3 Strengthen Downtown Connectivity and Activity

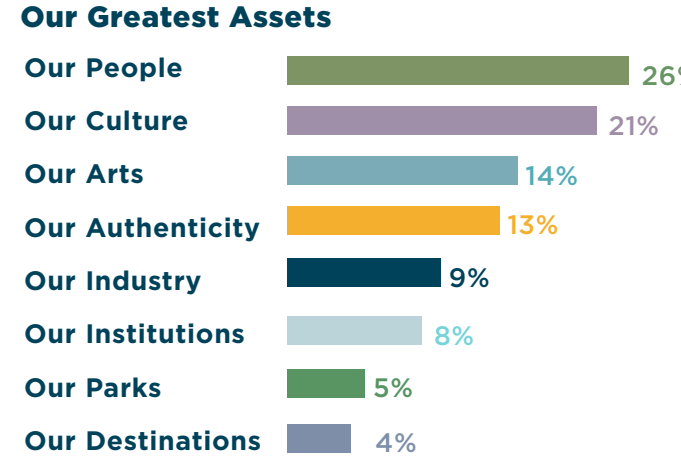
Stronger connections between Downtown, East Winston, and Old Salem were top of mind. Respondents also want more retail, entertainment, and family-friendly options, and activity, especially in the evenings.

-  More retail options
-  Dining & entertainment
-  Family-friendly experiences
-  Evening activity & nightlife
-  Better connections & walkability

 Downtown is a primary destination for work, dining, and events, participants identified opportunities to diversify the reasons people visit

4 Build on Existing Strengths

Respondents identified our people, culture, and arts as our greatest strength, followed by authenticity, industry, and institutions. These assets provide a strong foundation to build on.



ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee is composed of community leaders, partner organizations, institutional representatives, and stakeholders representing a range of perspectives across Winston-Salem. The committee serves as an ongoing sounding board throughout the Strategic Action Plan process, helping guide discussions, validate themes, and identify opportunities and priorities for the community.

Participants shared ideas organized around five themes by responding to specific prompts. They used colored cards to write their responses, with the orange cards highlighting the ideas they felt were a priority and most important.



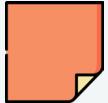
5 PROMPTS
To guide ideas and discussion



5 THEMES
Ideas shared across five thought wall banners



YELLOW CARDS
For general ideas and feedback



ORANGE CARDS
To highlight the priority and most important ideas



THE PROMPTS

- What is Winston-Salem known for?
- What does Winston-Salem do really well?
- What is missing/needed to accelerate our growth and success?
- What do you wish we did more of in Winston-Salem?
- What would better connect people with the Downtown core?



AT A
GLANCE



5
Prompts



19
Committee Members



250+
Ideas Shared

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Strengthen community identity

We value our rich history, heritage, arts and institutions. We should celebrate what makes our City unique and tell our story with pride.

- › Protect local history and tell community stories
- › Build a stronger and more unified identity
- › Celebrate arts, culture, and authenticity
- › Promote Winston-Salem more intentionally

“Protect the history and tell stories about the past”

Create a more vibrant Downtown

We want more energy, activity, and reasons to visit Downtown, day and night, through events, dining, retail, arts, and family-friendly experiences

- › More entertainment and dining options
- › Stronger Downtown activation and events
- › Family-friendly destinations and activities
- › More vibrancy, welcoming space, and energy

“More vibrancy and the people will come”

Improve connectivity and access

Better connections through transit, walkability, parking, biking, and green spaces, will make it easier for people to get where they want to go.

- › Better public transportation
- › Improved walkability and bike connections
- › Easier parking and navigation
- › Stronger neighborhood connections

“Make the city more pedestrian friendly”

Support collaboration and shared leadership

We thrive when we work together. Stronger collaboration, clear leadership, and a shared vision with accountability for results.

- › Unified community vision and leadership
- › Stronger collaboration between organizations
- › More accountability and follow through
- › Better communication and coordination

“Strategic vision for the whole community to rally around”

Embrace boldness and innovation

We want Winston-Salem to think bigger, take smart risks, and build on its momentum through innovation and transformative ideas.

- › Think bigger and take risks
- › Support innovation and entrepreneurship
- › Invest in transformative ideas
- › Build on Winston-Salem’s momentum

“Be bold”

LISTENING SESSIONS

Between February and April 2026, a series of listening sessions brought together community leaders, business owners, residents, young professionals, institutional partners, and local organizations from across Winston-Salem. These conversations provided deeper insight into the community’s strengths, opportunities, and long-term aspirations while helping identify the ideas and priorities that consistently rose to the top across stakeholder groups.

While each conversation reflected different perspectives and lived experiences, several common themes emerged throughout the process. Participants spoke positively about Winston-Salem’s strong cultural identity, arts and innovation ecosystem, educational and healthcare institutions, and overall quality of life. At the same time, discussions frequently focused on the importance of strengthening Downtown activity, improving connectivity between neighborhoods and destinations, supporting inclusive growth, and creating a clearer shared vision for the future of the community.

Many conversations also reflected a desire to move from ideas to action. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration, visible leadership, coordinated investment, and building upon the community’s existing strengths rather than redefining them. The listening sessions reinforced a shared interest in creating a Winston-Salem that is more connected, vibrant, welcoming, and resilient over the long term.

AT A GLANCE

 **90+** Participants

 **12** Listening sessions

“*Winston-Salem has a strong foundation and now is the time to align our efforts, strengthen our core, and invest with intention in the future.*”



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Across all listening sessions, several recurring conversations rose to the top. These reflect what makes Winston-Salem special and where focused attention and investments are most needed.

Downtown is viewed as central to the City’s future.

Downtown emerged in nearly every conversation as both our greatest asset and our greatest opportunity. Participants want a more welcoming, vibrant, and more connected core with active public spaces, adaptive reuses and consistent reasons to gather, live, work, and invest.

creative
connectivity
entertainment
welcoming
arts
walkability
activation
events
fun spaces
vibrancy
public spaces

“*We just need more energy and more reasons for people to be and stay longer in Downtown.*”

Winston-Salem is proud of its identity and ready to reinvent.

Participants spoke positively about Winston-Salem’s arts and innovation ecosystem, healthcare and educational institutions, and small-town feel. At the same time, there is a shared desire to build on that foundation, tell the story more boldly and put Winston-Salem on the map.

arts
history
reinvention
innovation
identity
authentic
small-town feel
unique
“Put Winston-Salem on the map”

“*We want to be known for what makes us unique*”

Growth must feel connected, inclusive, and intentional.

Participants emphasized that future investment must benefit existing residents and neighborhoods. Access to opportunity, housing stability, strong connections, and equitable investments are essential to building a thriving city for everyone.

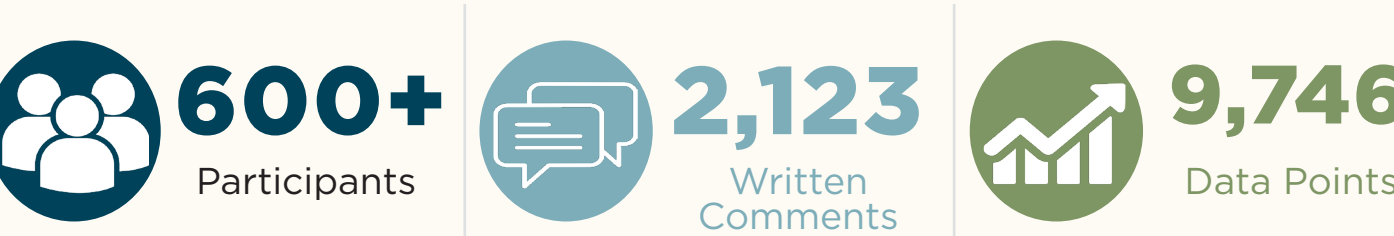
housing stability
childcare
support
belonging
collaboration
opportunity
mobility
access
community investment

“*There’s a desire to build within rather than redefine the community*”

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community survey captured **more than 600 responses** from residents, workers, and business owners. The results highlight what people valued the most about Winston-Salem, and the experiences, investments, and improvements that will shape a stronger future together.

AT A GLANCE



Platforms: Social Point

Survey Window: Feb. 20 - Apr. 24, 2026

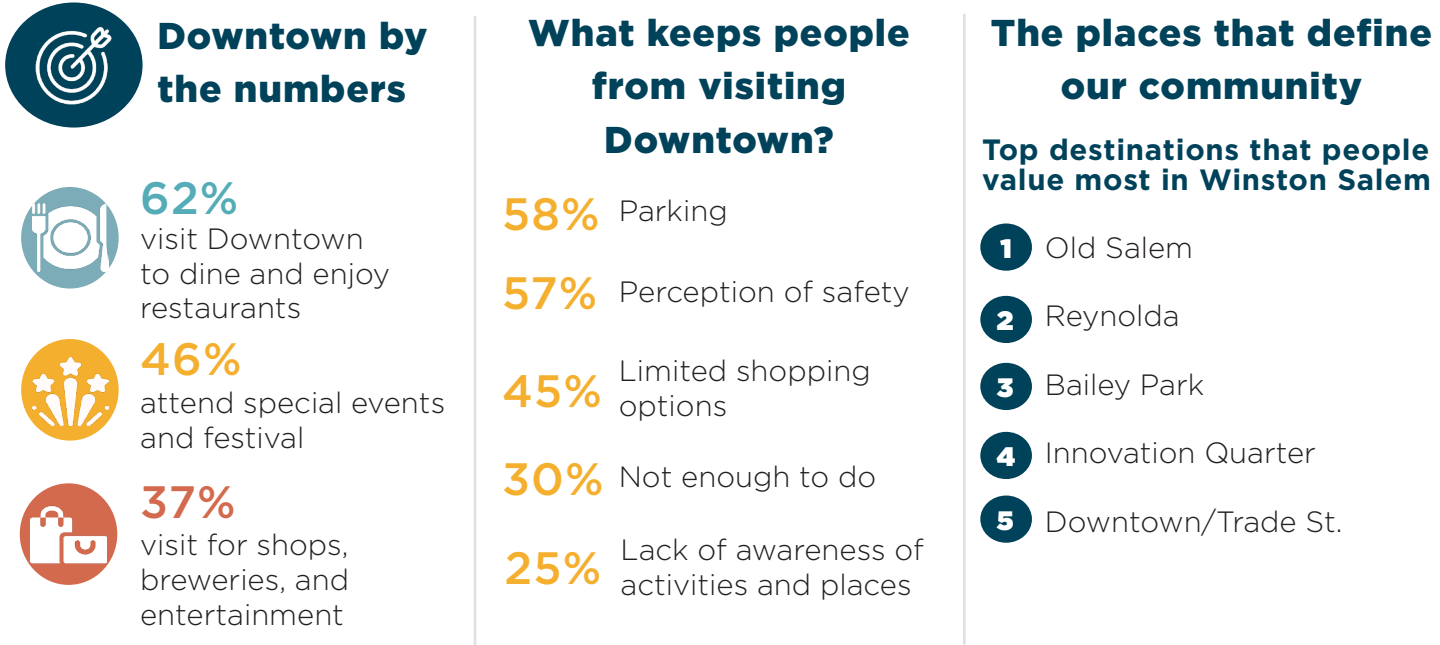
Distribution:

Shared through a combination of media outreach, community networks, word-of-mouth engagement, and support from local leaders and organizations who encouraged participation across Winston-Salem.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

What would make Winston-Salem an even better place to live?



OPPORTUNITY WORKSHOP

The Opportunity Workshop brought together community leaders, board members, advisory committee members, and listening session participants to review the community survey findings and co-create ideas for the future. Through interactive polling and hands-on mapping exercises, participants identified the experiences, connections, and solutions that will strengthen our neighborhoods and create a more vibrant, connected urban core.

THEMES THAT SHAPE OUR FUTURE



Stronger connections

Better links between neighborhoods and destinations, safer and more walkable streets, bike and trail networks, and easier ways to get around.



More vibrant and active urban core

More restaurants, retail, arts, events, and outdoor spaces that create energy, attract people, and bring the urban core to life year-around.



Everyday livability

More housing, grocery stores, childcare centers, neighborhood retail, parks and everyday amenities that support residents, families, students, and workers.



Building on our identity

Protecting our history and character while embracing innovation, arts, and adaptive reuse that make each neighborhood unique and authentic.



AT A
GLANCE



60+
Participants



10
Polling
Questions



Collaborative
Idea Generation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Urban Core Today & Tomorrow

Today

- Disconnected places and neighborhoods
- Underutilized spaces and vacant buildings
- Navigating parking is challenging
- Limited everyday amenities
- Activity and vibrancy vary across the core
- Some areas could feel more welcoming and comfortable



Tomorrow

- Connected neighborhoods and destinations
- Walkable, bikeable, and easy to navigate
- Vibrant streets and active public spaces
- Everyday amenities for residents and visitors
- Year-round activity and experiences
- Safe and welcoming, and inclusive for all

Ideas, Priorities, and a Common Vision for Our Urban Core



97%

want accelerated or
transformative action



4 out of 5

believe local government,
private sector, community,
and nonprofits should play
a role



TOP
PRIORITIES

more authentic places,
inviting streets, easier
parking, and more arts &
culture

WHAT'S NEXT

Turning input into action for Winston-Salem

Building on what we've learned, the next phase will turn insights into strategies and actions that strengthen Winston-Salem's urban core.



Synthesize Input

Analyze engagement findings, market and destination data, and community assets to identify key themes and priority opportunities



Identify Focus Areas

Define priority areas for investment, programming, and placemaking that reinforce the community's vision and strength



Evaluate Opportunities

Assess placemaking, mobility, connectivity, and destination opportunities that enhance the experience and drive economic impact



Develop Strategies

Create actionable strategies and initiatives that align with community priorities and support growth



Implementation

Define implementation steps, partners, resources, and metrics to guide execution and track progress



Finalize the Plan

Prepare the Strategic Action Plan and supporting materials to guide decision-making and investment



STAY INFORMED. STAY INVOLVED.

Your continued input will help refine priorities and shape strategies that will guide Winston-Salem's future. Visit [ImagineWinstonSalem.com](https://www.imaginewinstonsalem.com) to explore project materials, review engagement findings, access completed deliverables, and stay informed on upcoming milestones and opportunities to participate.



imagine

winston-salem 

