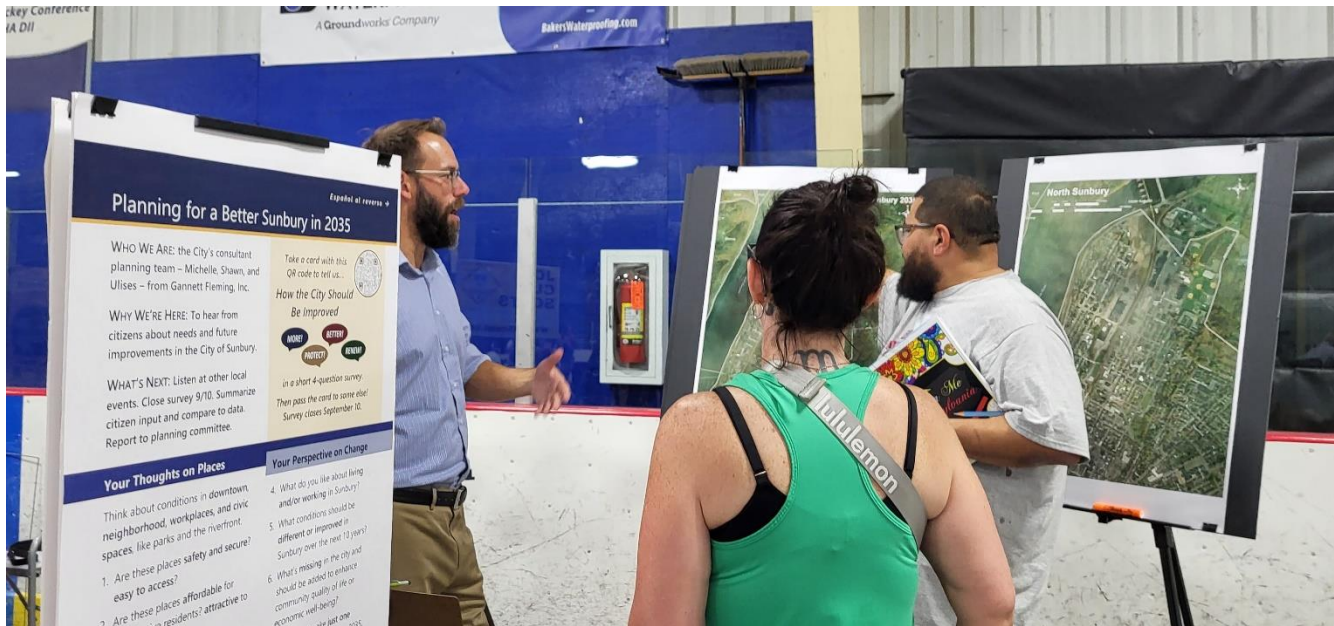


# Appendix A to Sunbury 2035: Public Engagement Report



*National Night Out, August 1, 2023, at James R. Eister Youth & Community Center*

## Purpose

Early engagement with citizens of Sunbury helped characterize existing community and economic development conditions and identify the conditions of concern in the minds of City residents and others who spend time in Sunbury. Themes from early engagement were used to shape Sunbury 2035's goals and objectives.

## Engagement by the Numbers

**4 community events attended** to interface with Sunbury citizens.

- National Night Out, August 1, 2023, at James R. Eister Youth & Community Center
- Diversity Multicultural Food Truck & BBQ Festival, August 28, 2023, on Memorial Drive
- Autumn Arts Faire, October 21, 2023, in Cameron Park
- Trunk or Treat, October 26, 2023, at Beiter's Furniture, 1189 North 4th Street

**720 estimated attendees**

- 216 individuals, including children and youth, engaged in 110 conversations.

**4-Question Online Survey**, August 1-November 1, 2023

- 287 survey promotion cards distributed.
- 8 survey responses (3% response)

# Themes from Engagement Conversations & Survey Responses

## Residents Express Appreciation for

### Small city qualities

- It's walkable, bikeable in its block-street-sidewalk pattern and (low) traffic volume.

### Community Facilities and Services

- The library.
- City parks, pool, and playgrounds.
- Riverfront Park and the walking trail.

### Community Culture

- Family-friendly events.
- The mural on Market Street.
- Projects like Sunbury Wetland Ecological and Educational Park (SWEEP)

## Residents Desire Improved Conditions for

### Downtown

- More stores, restaurants; less vacancy, more vibrancy.

### A Mix of Economic Anchors

- Re-use of vacant commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings for business.

### In their Neighborhoods

- More housing options, especially apartments.
- Quality housing for a fair price.
- Better property maintenance and code enforcement.
- Additional and updated parks. A dog park.

### Street and Sidewalk Conditions

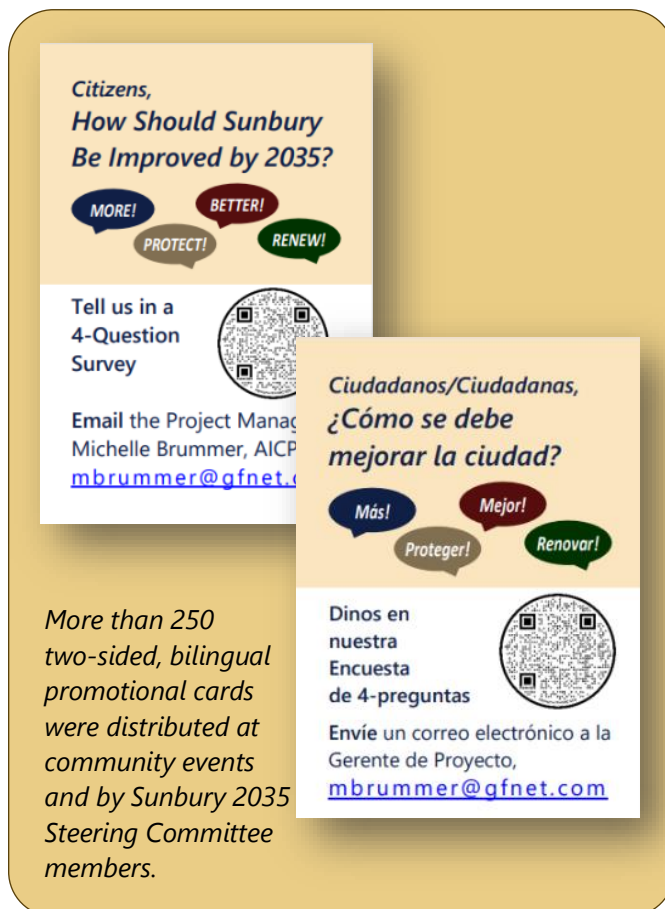
- Better street surface conditions for vehicles.
- Better sidewalk surface conditions for pedestrians, including persons with disabilities.
- Safer conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- More travel and transportation options – within Sunbury and to other places.

### Community Culture

- Stronger, more positive sense of community.

### A Greener City

- With trees and vegetation throughout public and private spaces.



## Conversations with Citizens on Sunbury in 2023

The following notes were taken by the planning team as they conversed with adult citizens at community events. These notes reflect perceptions and opinions of the City as described to the planning team. Text in brackets reflects inferences made by team members.

### **Positive Attributes, Conditions, Perceptions**

*What I like best about Sunbury is...*

- The cost of living is affordable.
- City services are sufficient.
- Small businesses, like Fresh Roasted Coffee, have room to grow.
- Kids can walk and bike around town [no car/driver needed].
- It's a walkable city.
- Low traffic.
- There are fun activities and events for families with kids.
- Parks, playgrounds, and the community swimming pool.
- Recent updates to Kiwanis playground.
- The river!!!
- The library.
- The mural on Market Street by artist Pedro Reyes.
- Community projects like Sunbury Wetland Ecological and Educational Park (SWEEP).
- The availability of a HeadStart program.
- Non-profit services, like Recovery Church, sponsored by Christ Wesleyan, which has a building at Market & 4th Streets.

### **Negative Attributes, Conditions, Perceptions**

*What I like least about Sunbury is...*

- The lack of businesses in downtown.
- Too much vacancy downtown.
- Lack of downtown atmosphere.
- Loss of Dollar General as a mini grocery store on Market Street in downtown.
- Lack of quality housing for the price.
- Rent is high; it's unaffordable for local income/economy. (2)
- Properties are not maintained. (2)
- Owners keep vacant property off the market.
- The homeless population needs food and shelter/housing.
- Code enforcement is insufficient.
- Buildings need repair.
- Poor street and alley conditions, especially Packer Avenue near the RR (2) and Susquehanna Avenue (2).
- Roads have potholes.
- Speeding on main roads, such as 4th Street near Dunkin Donuts.
- Concern for traffic on n 4<sup>th</sup> Street near new McDonald's.
- Parking is allowed too close to intersections.
- Parking at N Center Street.

*Continued*



*Diversity Multicultural Food Truck & BBQ Festival, August 28, 2023, on Memorial Drive*

### **Negative Attributes, Conditions, Perceptions** (continued)

- Poor sidewalk conditions are a safety issue. (3)
- Trees (too much tree cover) on Market Street/PA 61.
- The PA 61 bridge is [perceived as] dangerous for walkers and bicyclists.
- North end of riverfront trail is dirt/gravel; not as used or as safe as the rest.
- Streets and sidewalks aren't safe for kids to walk due to drug use/issues, and not safe for adults at night either.
- Middle School is still vacant; it would make a great college extension.

- Since Beck Elementary became a HeadStart/ preschool facility, Chief Elementary is the only elementary school in the City and it requires busing from the south end.
- Vandalism, especially to public property. (2)
- Not all plastics marked recyclable are accepted locally.
- Taxes are a disincentive/barrier to investment.

### **Improvement Suggestions**

- Need trades education and jobs.
- More business in downtown—more stores and eateries, like Lewisburg.
- Attract light manufacturing.
- Re-purpose vacant buildings – Celotex (n 4th Street), hospital (N 11th Street), silk mill, (1150 Walnut Street), and Bimbo Bakery (249 N 11th Street). [status of] Edison Hotel.
- Add a convenience store near the high school, maybe at the gas station.
- Improve existing housing stock.
- Promote code awareness/education.
- More apartments.
- Increase the number of affordable apartments.
- Increase the number of apartments for persons with disabilities, seniors, and low-income.
- Need housing for seniors 55+; subsidized and market-rate. Need apartment options.





*Autumn Arts Faire, October 21, 2023, in Cameron Park*

### **Improvement Suggestions** *(continued)*

- Resurface streets.
- Widen travel lanes and parking stalls for larger vehicles.
- Repair/Replace sidewalks.
- Install curb ramps, especially on the north end of the City.
- Replace missing street lighting, e.g., Reagan Avenue.
- Convert the ice rink into a roller rink in summer.
- Playground on South 2nd Street needs improvements: trees, picnic tables, better equipment. Same for Goodwill playground; fundraising is ongoing.
- Pave north end of river trail.
- Expand events and activities by the river.
- Develop a beach on the river.
- Provide more activities for youth under 18 years, including toddlers and young children.
- Open the new high school stadium/track to the public.
- Add a dog park.
- Enhance event planning and coordination to avoid competition for the same audience.
- Update the City website to be ADA-compliant.
- Plant more trees in residential areas.
- Need reassessment/tax reduction.
- Engage youth in planning and making community improvements; provide opportunities for service and responsibility.

## Suggestions from Sunbury's Youngest Citizens

Kids under the age of 18 attended each of the four community events and were the "target audience" at the Trunk or Treat. The planning team invited the youngest of the City's citizens to "make a wish for Sunbury." The most frequent suggestions included:

- A cleaner river.
- Better sidewalks for people with disabilities, like my grandma.
- More parks.
- Another skate park.
- Another water park.
- A roller skating rink.
- More trees.
- More trash cans.
- Recycling bins in public spaces.

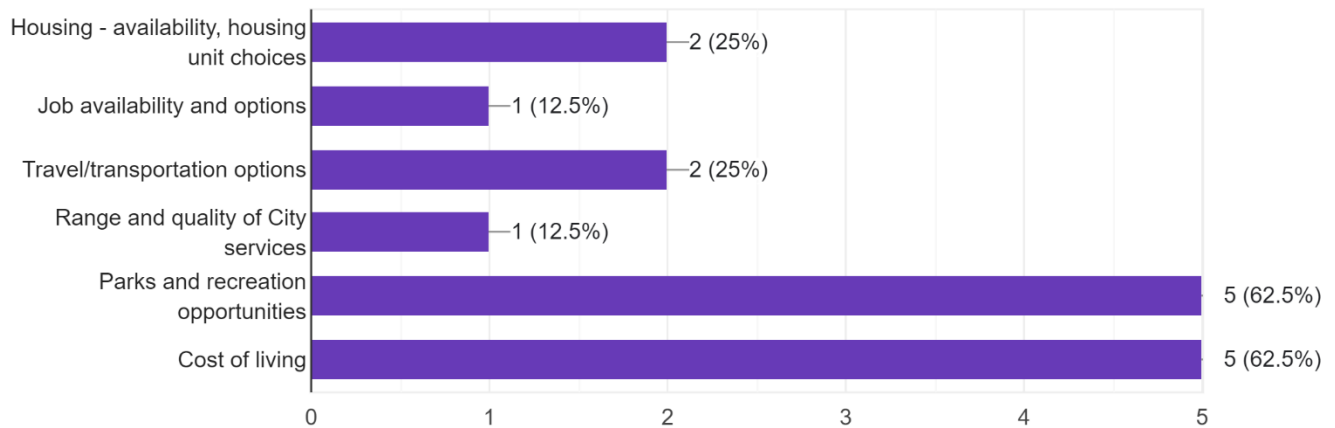


*Trunk or Treat, October 26, 2023, at Beiter's Furniture, Mattress, & Appliances, 1189 North 4th Street*

## Additional Input Collected through a Short Survey

The online survey was intended to supplement engagement at community events. The survey was promoted with a two-sided, bilingual card with a QR code and a project team email address. There were only 8 responses at the survey close date, so it is by no means representative of all residents. However, these respondents took time to share their concerns and ideas, as reported below.

**Q1 What do you like about living and/or working in Sunbury, and why? Check all that apply.**



**Q2 What conditions should be different or improved in Sunbury over the next 10 years? Describe conditions as different or improved.**

The following open-ended responses were received. Text shown as **bold** represents the topic.

- Because we provide **inexpensive housing with no true business opportunities** in town, we are becoming the new Hazelton, where our "residents" are running flop houses for NY/NJ employees, set on collecting services from both states. That or we service families trying to be closer to members in the PA or Federal Prison System. Our community is in decline.
- **Improved Image. Improved sense of community. Improved community pride.**
- **Sense of pride**, realtors promoting Sunbury, improved school image
- Develop **new apartments downtown**.
- We need **more green**. Trees, paths, and parks. A lot of the streets do not have any trees or greenery.
- Keep **making downtown more attractive. Attract manufacturing jobs**.
- **Recycling** needs to be included in taxes and pick up weekly.
- To have **more mental health and youth services**



### Q3 What's missing in the city, and should be added to enhance community quality of life or economic well-being? Describe who would benefit from the addition.

The following open-ended responses were received. Text shown as **bold** represents the topic.

- **Travel and transportation options** are horrible. If you can't/don't drive, you have no feasible shopping or employment opportunities. **If we had a transportation option to Harrisburg**, that would allow more residents to find work closer to better paying jobs.
- More **small business**. Rail trail. Lake Augusta corridor. Another **blue-collar business, manufacturer or tech business, food processing plant**. **Higher level of housing. A larger business office in the downtown**. Improved **pocket park maintenance & support for neighborhood groups**.
- **Community college admin building in the downtown** to bring jobs, grow job opportunities for citizens and support downtown businesses.
- **Clothing and shoe stores**. Need to entice stores to move across the river back to Sunbury. The population center is here. Once the bypass is finished, the traffic counts will be higher in Sunbury, rather than Shamokin Dam. The entire city would benefit.
- The path along the river is great. But **[the riverside path] needs to be connected at both ends to something**, a bike path to Norry or state identified bike route.

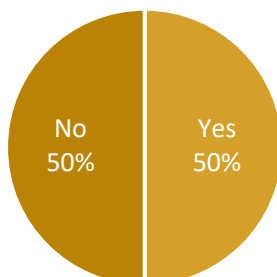
### Q4 If you could make just one change in the Sunbury by 2035, what would it be?

The following open-ended responses were received. Text shown as **bold** represents the topic.

- **Bring a big business to town**, so real people will live here.
- Have the city **support SRI financially** to some degree so that it has a stable base of support to allow it to do more in facilitating volunteers and grants on behalf of the city.
- **Improved support of Sunbury Revitalization** so that they can maintain staffing.
- **A vibrant downtown** with lots of foot traffic and people living downtown.
- **More green**. Trees, plants, parks, environment
- Promote **home ownership**. Too high a percentage of rental properties. No pride in ownership.
- **One larger corporation** to offer jobs and a hospital.
- I would like to see **the former Celotex property developed**.

### Q5 Are you interested in helping to make change in the City as a volunteer?

(optional)



### Q6 Would you like to be notified about future public engagement events for Sunbury 2035?

(optional)

