

Listening Session Themes

52 Students, 3 High Schools

What Youth Want for Owatonna

Fun Activities

Youth are seeking activities that are low-cost, fun and healthy. Activities where they can build relationships with other youth and caring adults. Recreational activities, sports and college/career readiness activities were mentioned most often.



Safe Spaces

Safe communal spaces where all are welcome and there are clear rules and consequences, including both indoor and outdoor, are what youth want. Examples mentioned were a YMCA, indoor skate park, basketball courts, swimming pool, shopping center, amusement park, and boxing ring.



Access to Health Resources

Youth want access to affordable health and dental care. They want basic information, referrals to professionals when in crisis, peer mentors in school, classes and regular wellness checks for their mental health and substance use.



More Supports in School

Youth recognize they spend a lot of time in school. They want drop-in homework help, more access to teachers and staff outside of school time, clear rules and consequences, less exposure to vaping, updated reproductive health curriculum, and healthy school meals.



Inclusive Culture

Youth want Owatonna to be a community that accepts all. They want their schools to be inclusive of LGBTQ youth and other cultures. They want their community and adults to be understanding of youth needs, where they can safely discuss teen issues with less stigma around mental health.



Affordable Transportation

Youth recognize they need more access to affordable and reliable transportation to get to school, extracurricular activities, sports, work, health care and more.



Source: United Way of Steele County and the Steele County Coalition for Healthy Youth, March 2023

WHAT TEENS WANT

MEDFORD & BLOOMING PRAIRIE



1. INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Acceptance of LGBTQ and communities of color. Support for students who enjoy the arts and theater.

3. SAFE SPACES



Places to socialize like a waterpark, dog park, ice cream or coffee shop, movie theater, community center, and improved workout facilities.



5. MORE SCHOOL SUPPORTS

Support for transfer/open enrolled students. Mental wellbeing activities, test/homework-free zones. Students want to feel safe, physically and emotionally.



7. SOCIAL CONNECTION

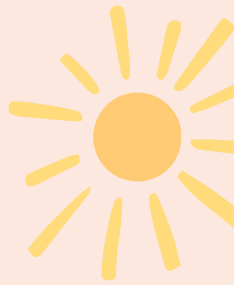
Teens want to feel connected and welcome in their hometown and in neighboring communities. They want more opportunities to build relationships with adults.



2. SENSE OF COMMUNITY PRIDE

Youth want more flowers, green spaces and community-building events. Improvements to empty shopping centers.

4. FUN & AFFORDABLE ACTIVITIES



Teens want more free and low-cost options during school breaks and summer-with scholarships available for those who need it.



6. WORK/LIFE OPPORTUNITIES

Teens want to feel more prepared for life after high school. They want more FACS, financial literacy, and AP/PSEO courses as well as job opportunities, trade apprenticeships and job shadowing.



8. COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Youth would like a donation center in their community or at school. They want more resources for community arts, music and theater programs.



12 STUDENTS, 2 HIGH SCHOOLS