

# Student Engagement Report for the 2024 East Lansing Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared in Spring 2024 by Andrew Arbaugh, Hannah Prins, Jordan Swiler, Herlin Rumar, & Rolinof Wanma



**MICHIGAN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

School of Planning, Design  
and Construction



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## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Zenia Kotval, Ph.D., FAICP  
Professor and Program Director, Urban and  
Regional Planning  
Michigan State University

Katharine Merritt, MURP  
Instructor, Urban and Regional Planning  
Michigan State University

## CITY OF EAST LANSING

Landon Bartley, AICP  
Principal Planner  
City of East Lansing

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The Practicum Team collectively acknowledges that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan's twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgment, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples. Learn more about this Land Acknowledgment from the MSU American Indian and Indigenous Studies program.



# Executive Summary

The City of East Lansing is a university town that is home to Michigan State University. Based on 2022 census data, the 20-24 age group makes up nearly 35% of the city's population. While students individually may be transient residents, the MSU student body is present over time. Therefore, the City of East Lansing is interested in student input for its 2024 East Lansing Comprehensive Plan Update. This practicum project was a result of collective effort by a group of Michigan State University (MSU) Urban Planning students in the program's capstone practicum course. The Practicum Team worked in collaboration with the City of East Lansing to collect student input for the 2024 East Lansing Comprehensive Plan Update (2024 Update). The City of East Lansing determined four main focus areas for the 2024 Update based on initial resident engagement activities: Equity, sustainability, housing, and public health. The Practicum Team strived to collect and organize feedback with these topics in mind and sought to identify additional topics that may be of interest to student groups.

A variety of methods were used to engage MSU students in asking for their perspectives on the city. This included a digital survey as well as 13 in-person workshops. The digital Student Engagement Survey was distributed by a QR code via flyers, social media, business cards, and referrals. In total, the survey garnered 164 student responses and asked students 3 demographic questions, 13 focus questions, and 2 open response questions. Overall, the main areas of concern for students was housing affordability, pedestrian safety, and road quality. Students felt positive however about the community as well as their access to green-space and health resources.

The Practicum Team facilitated two types of in-person workshops, 3 in-class discussion Workshops and 10 Sticky-Note Workshops. Two freshmen level classes and one sophomore level class participated in the Discussion Workshops for a total of 98 participants. Each session lasted a half hour and asked student groups of three to four to discuss what they liked about East Lansing and what they would change. The team conducted a total of 10 Sticky-Note Workshops which collected 241 student responses. The Sticky-Note Workshops were carried out at various hubs across the MSU campus including Brody Hall, the Stem Building, the MSU Library, and the MSU Union Building. The in-person workshops totaled over 35 engagement hours all together over the course of the semester.

The Practicum Team was able to reach 508 students throughout the engagement process, far exceeding the original goal of 385 students. The end result of this collaboration was a better understanding of MSU student perspectives as they relate to the East Lansing Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, the project shed some light on engagement methods and locations that may or may not work well with MSU student groups which may help guide future engagement initiatives in the community.



## Student Engagement outreach by Numbers:



**13**

Student  
Engagement  
Workshops

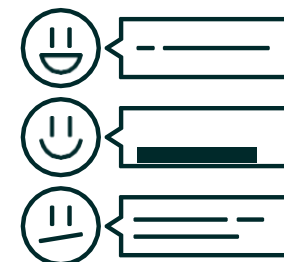


**36.5**

Student Engagement hours

**508**

Student  
Engagement  
Total Number of  
responders



**3**

Discussion  
Workshops

**103**

Total  
Participants



**1.5**

Total hours

UP 201

**40**  
Students

**30**  
Minutes



UP 100

**45**  
Students

**30**  
Minutes



LA 205

**18**  
Students

**30**  
Minutes



Online Survey

**164**

Students

Sticky Note  
Workshops

**10**

Total  
Participants

**241**



**35**

Total hours



Library

**103**  
Students

**12**  
Hours

3x

Union

**72**  
Students

**11**  
Hours

3x

Brody

**54**  
Students

**6**  
Hours

2x

STEM

**12**  
Students

**6**  
Hours

2x



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# HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

Engagement data is organized into tree-maps which are a type of chart that shows weighted hierarchical data. The larger the rectangle, the more times a certain topic was mentioned by students. Green rectangles indicate a positive tone while pink rectangles indicate an overall negative tone in comments.



Figure 1: Example of an engagement data tree map.

The survey question asked is listed along with the overall rating and the importance rating. The overall rating is the median score of all student responses that was given to the indicator listed in the question. Each survey question was followed up with a similar rating system to gauge the importance of the indicator to student groups. The importance rating is the median score of all student respondents' ratings relating to the importance of the indicator.

	Overall Rating	Importance Rating
Q1. The city of east Lansing offers adequate opportunity for the recycling and reuse of materials.	3/5	4/5



# Introduction

## MSU Planning Practicum

The planning practicum course in Michigan State University's Urban and Regional Planning program is a culminating education experience allowing students to put their theoretical knowledge into practical use. Through this course, urban planning students gain hands-on experience and skills relevant to their field of study by taking on a real world project. This practical exposure prepares students to transition effectively into the professional world while simultaneously helping communities. The student team preparing the report will henceforth be referred to as the MSU Practicum Team.

## Project Background

At the time of writing, the City of East Lansing is in the process of creating the 2024 East Lansing Comprehensive Plan Update. The most recent comprehensive plan was crafted in 2018. In the six years from 2018 to 2024, the city has undergone several changes in part due to the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts in population. The student engagement project for spring 2024 conducted by the MSU Practicum Team is part of a larger engagement process that will help the City of East Lansing to ensure a vibrant, sustainable, and resilient community for all of its citizens.





# Project Goals

1. To understand the needs and desires of students as they relate to the 2024 East Lansing Comprehensive Plan Update.
2. Understand engagement methods that work well with msu student groups.
3. make recommendations guided by STUDENT ENGAGEMENT feedback through the lens of professional planning.







## Location

The City of East Lansing is located in south central Michigan in both Ingham & Clinton County. The city is home to Michigan State University and was originally dubbed “Collegeville”. The city was later chartered as “East Lansing” in reference to its bordering of the state’s capital, Lansing, MI.

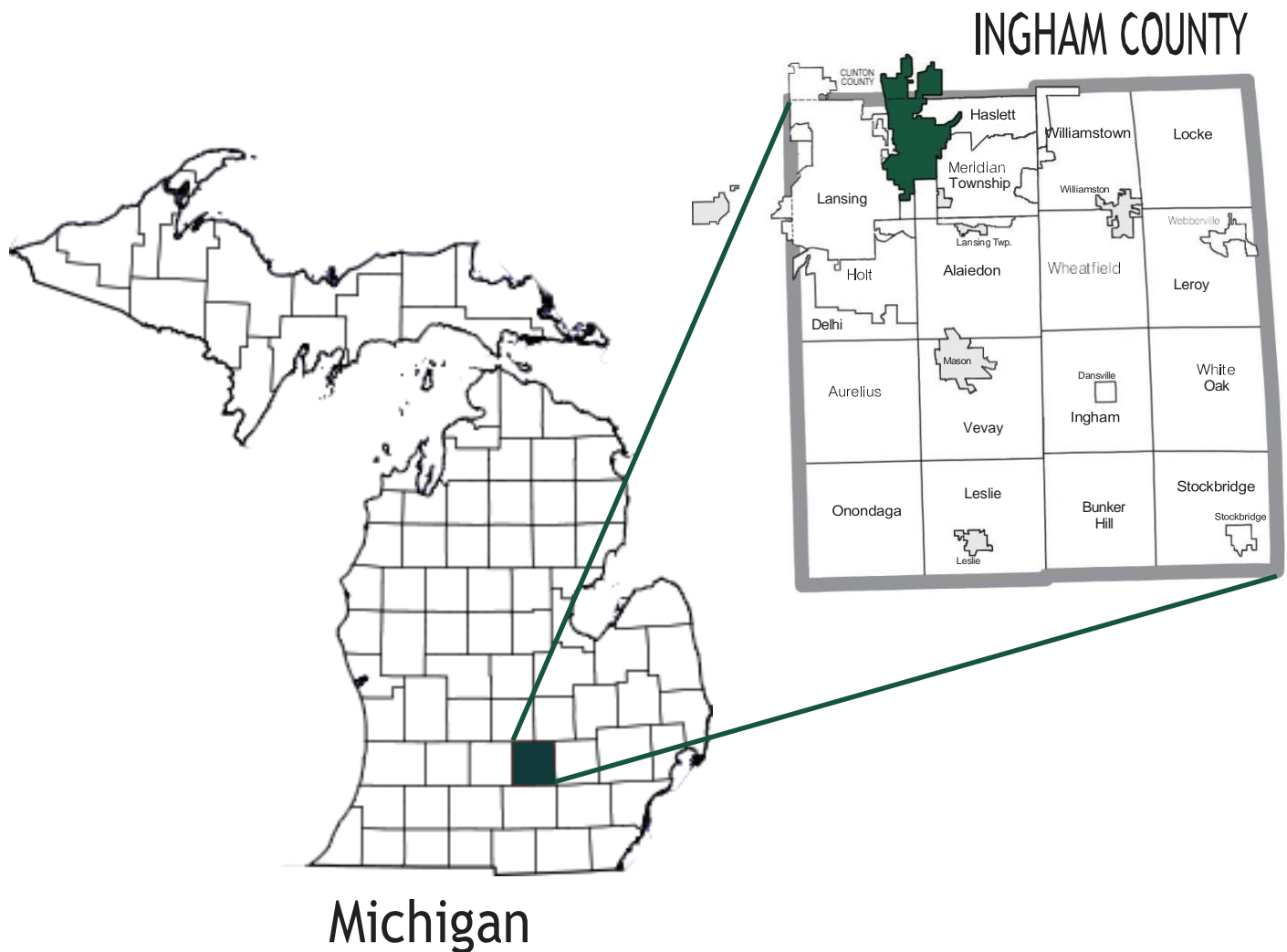


Figure 2: The State of Michigan and Ingham County context maps. (MSU Practicum Team 2024)



# City of East Lansing

## INTRODUCTION

### CITY OF EAST LANSING ZONING MAP

East Lansing Boundary  
Provision Center Overlay Zones  
Conditional Zoning

RENTAL OVERLAYS  
R-O-1  
R-O-2  
R-O-3

ZONING  
A\* - Dewitt Township - AG  
B1-General Office Business  
B2-Retail Sales Business  
B3-City Center Commercial  
B4-Restricted Office Business  
B5-Community Retail Sales Business  
BC\*-Dewitt Township - Business  
C-Community Facilities  
C-1\*-Meridian Township Commercial  
D\* - Bath Township - Development  
EAST VILLAGE  
M1-Manufacturing  
M4\*-Dewitt Township - Multiple Family  
OIP - Office Industrial Park  
P-Parking  
R1-Low Density Single-Family Residential  
R2-Medium Density Single-Family Residential  
R3-Single & Two Family Residential  
R3\*-Dewitt Township  
RA-Residential Ag

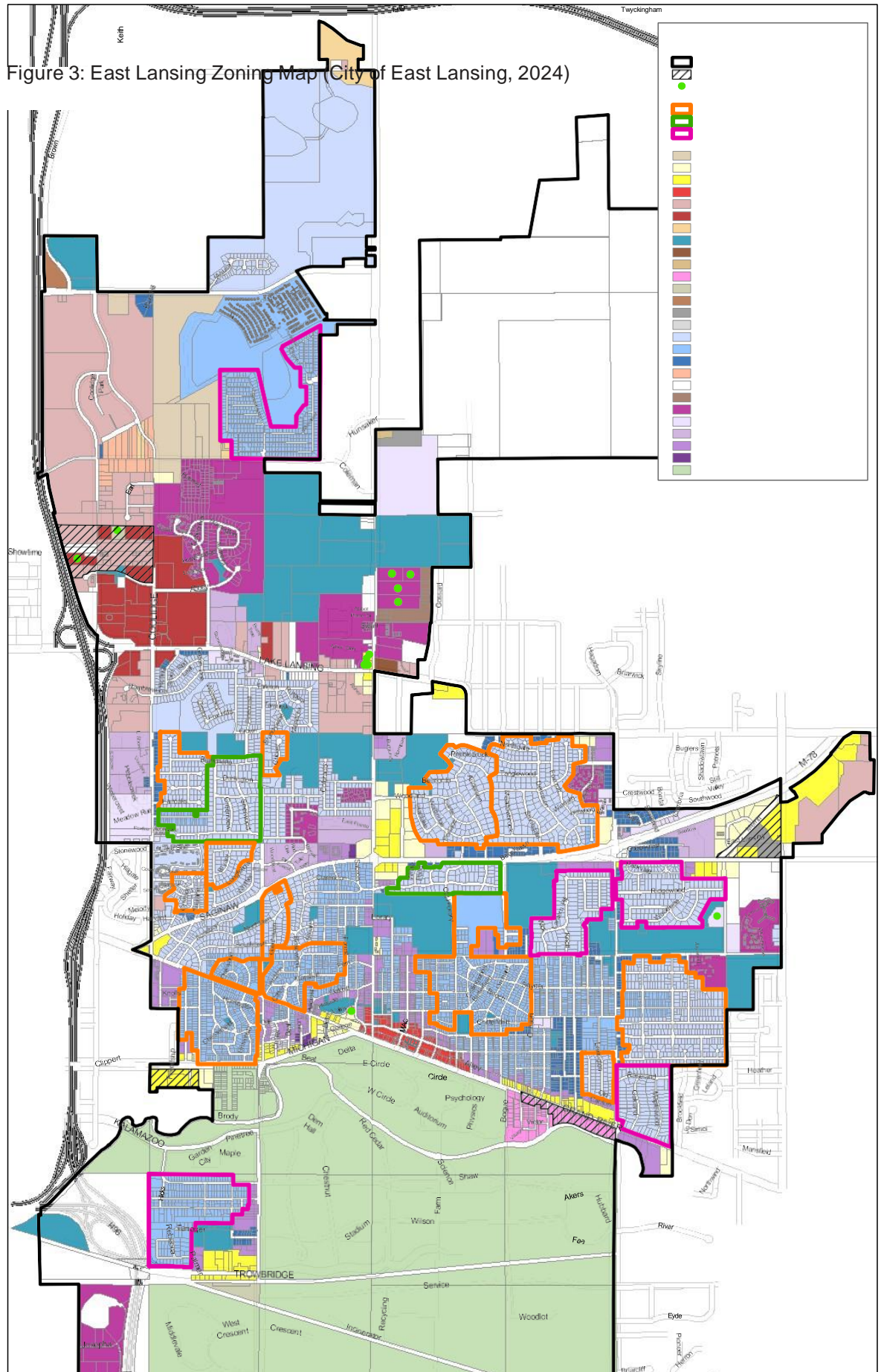
RDD\*-Meridian Township-Multiple Family Low Density  
RM08-Planned Unit Development  
RM14-Low Density Multiple Family  
RM22-Medium Density Multiple Family  
RM32-City Center Multiple Family Res  
RM54-University Oriented Multiple Family Re  
U-University

Jan 7, 2022





Figure 3: East Lansing Zoning Map (City of East Lansing, 2024)





# Engagement Methods

The Practicum Team employed a variety of engagement methods to gather student input on the City of East Lansing. The East Lansing Student Engagement initiative included an online digital survey, in-class Discussion Workshops, and public Sticky-Note Workshops.

## Digital Survey

The digital survey, titled “The Student Engagement Survey” (SES) was created using Qualtrics software. The SES took place over 45 days and targeted student respondents in the East Lansing Area. The Practicum Team developed a 16-question survey that included 3 demographic questions, 13 focus questions, and 2 open-ended response questions. Demographic questions on gender, residency, and class status were collected to identify patterns in the focus question input that may be correlated to those factors.

The 13 SES focus questions were designed to collect student opinions on various topics relating to live, work, and play in East Lansing. The questions covered a range of topics including housing, transportation, economics, accessibility, health, and recreation. All focus questions were formatted with a likert slider response scale. This format was chosen because it is quicker for respondents to read and interpret and is considered accessible on desktop and mobile devices. The first part of each focus question asked respondents how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement. The second part asked respondents to indicate how important the statement topic is to them.

The screenshot displays a Qualtrics survey interface for the 'Housing' category. It shows two questions, Q3 and Q4, each with a horizontal slider response scale. Q3 asks, 'There is an adequate amount of affordable housing in the City of East Lansing' and features a scale from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. Q4 asks, 'How important is the amount of affordable housing to you?' and features a scale from 'Not at all important' to 'Extremely important'. Both questions include a 'Scale' indicator and a mobile device icon.

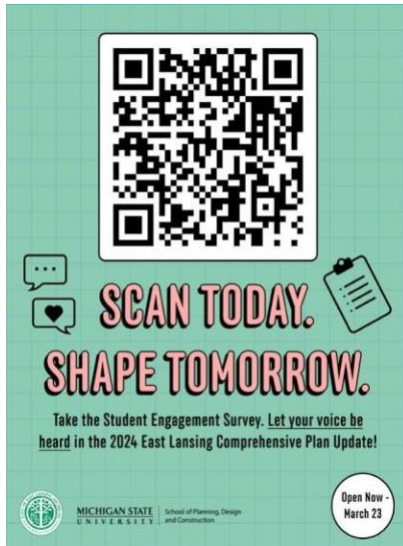
Figure 4: Qualtrics survey question slider and layout (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

Like any data collection tool, digital surveys have limitations and weaknesses that can be exploited, resulting in inaccurate or unclear data results. The Practicum Team took several measures to prevent this outcome. This included enabling the Qualtrics functions such as bot detection, preventing duplicate responses, and flagging too quick responses. The SES also required respondents to input a valid email address which worked to prevent duplicate or fraudulent responses further.



## Survey Campaign

The survey was advertised through various media, including posters, leaflets, social media, and other online channels to increase participation. The Practicum team designed two letter-size flyers to promote the survey through a QR code link. The flyer designs were made thoughtfully so as to be attractive and eye-catching but also simple to read and scan. The team also created smaller card-sized versions of the flyer with a QR code to hand out to students and for students to take with them at the Sticky Note Workshops.



Figures 5 & 6 SES Survey QR Flyer, Flyer Bulletin (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

## Analytics & QR Tracking

QR codes are square-shaped bar codes with information such as a URL link, text, photo or video. Most mobile devices can quickly scan QR codes and provide an accessible and graphical way of accessing information. Therefore, the Practicum Team developed a QR code for the survey link, making it a prominent element of the promotional flyers so students could quickly scan them.

The Practicum Team further took advantage of QR codes by using dynamic QR codes. Dynamic QR codes are a newer evolution of the traditional or 'static' QR that stores analytical information such as the number of scans and assigned scan addresses. This function allowed the Practicum Team to determine which locations and media types were the most successful in reaching participants. The project tracked five QR address types including flyers placed on the MSU campus, flyers placed downtown East Lansing, QR codes on social media, QR business cards, and in-person referrals. Overall social media and in-person referrals were the most successful avenues for reaching respondents and accounted for 67.1% of total responses. The physical flyers were less successful, particularly on the MSU campus. The Practicum Team feels that a prominent reason for this is that flyer bulletins on campus are already over saturated with flyers and many students appeared to walk right by the bulletins. The flyers in Downtown East Lansing however did see some success and received three times as many unique scans as the flyers posted on campus. The Practicum Team recommends focusing future engagement flyer media in the downtown area and working with local businesses to achieve this.



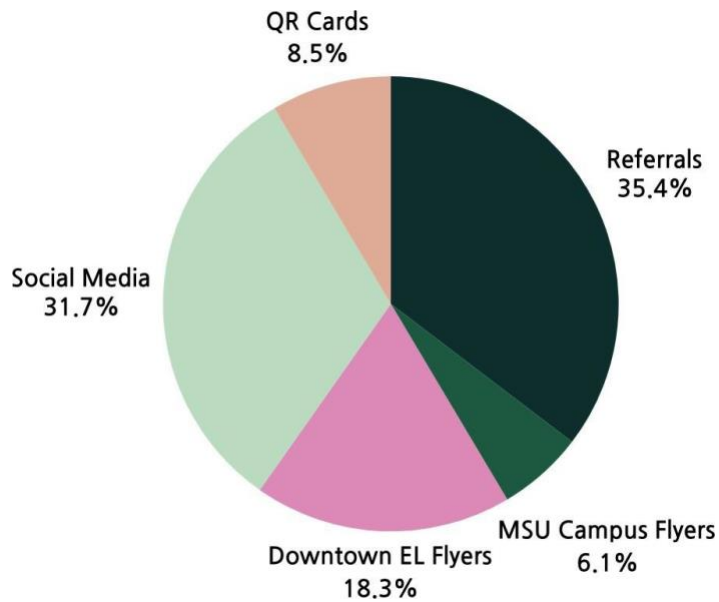


Figure 7: Survey participant QR type responses by percentage.

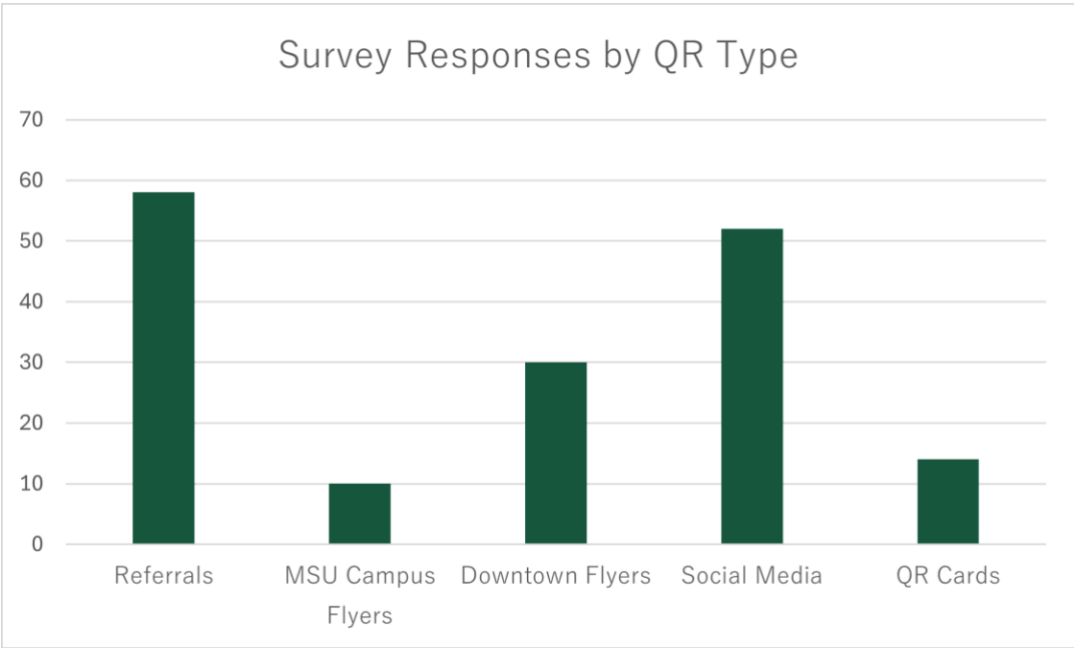


Figure 8: Number of survey responses by QR type.



### Discussion Workshop

The Discussion Workshops were developed to gain more nuanced student input. The workshops took place in physical classrooms and began by giving a short background on the project and the purpose of comprehensive planning. Students were then asked to form groups of 3-4 and assign a group scribe. Each group was asked to discuss the following prompt for 20 minutes:

What do you like about the City of East Lansing? What would you change?  
(Transportation, mobility, housing/rent, sustainability, accessibility, entertainment, safety, shopping, culture, recreation, design/architecture, etc.)

The students generated their ideas and comments on a sheet of paper. These papers were collected at the end of the activity to serve as the input for the report.

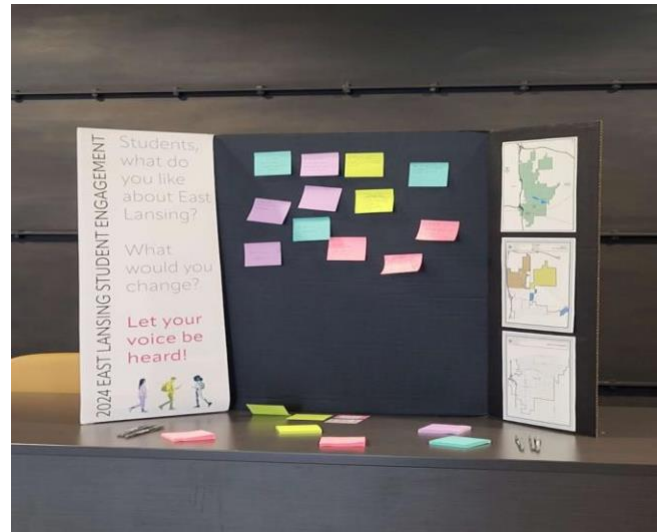
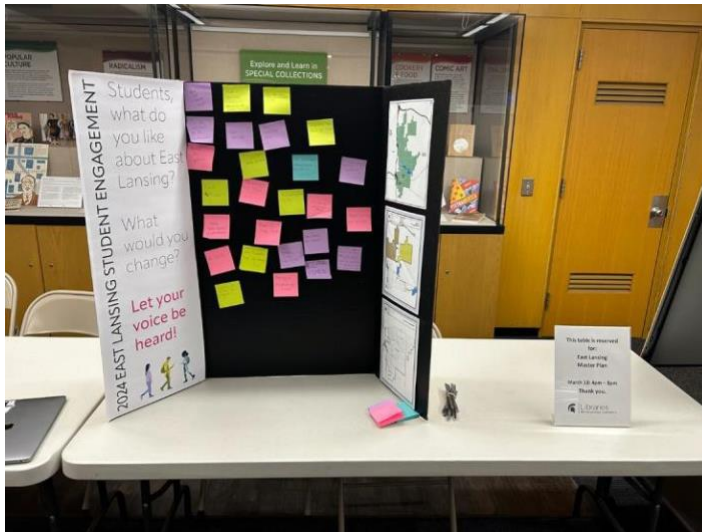


Figure 9: UP201 Discussion Workshop student groups discussing the prompted questions.



### Sticky Note Workshop

The Sticky Note Workshop was developed to gain more detailed input from students. In contrast to the discussion workshops, the Sticky Note workshops were held in a public location and were available to the student population at large. The workshop consisted of a cardboard trifold poster on a table. The question “Students, what do you like about the City of East Lansing? What would you change? Let your voice be heard!” was written on an adjacent whiteboard. Sticky notes and pens were provided at the table for students to write feedback and put onto the trifold board. The Practicum Team facilitated the feedback by answering project questions and encouraging passersby to give their input.



Figures 10 & 11: Sticky Note Workshop at the MSU Library and STEM Building.



# HOUSING

Affordable housing is a nationwide crisis as the cost of living rises and people become priced out of their own neighborhoods or are at risk of being unhoused. According to recent data, student and youth populations have been shown to be at a particular risk for becoming homeless. It is estimated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that in 2022 nearly 1 in 10 college students experienced some form of homelessness. This number is thought to be underreported in youth groups particularly because the action of ‘couch surfing’ or staying with friends is not thought of as experiencing homelessness in the traditional sense but is a form of housing insecurity nonetheless. This situation has cities looking for innovative ‘missing middle’ housing solutions that can provide affordable home options in traditional neighborhoods.

East Lansing, is home to a significant student population and as such has to maintain a careful balance between meeting the unique housing needs of students and permanent residents. Affordable housing, housing quality, rentals and neighborhood stability are at the forefront of discussion within the community. Ongoing efforts by local authorities and community organizations should aim to address these challenges and ensure a balanced housing landscape that meets the needs of all East Lansing residents.

## Survey Questions

	Overall Rating	Importance Rating
Q1. There is an adequate amount of affordable housing in the City of East Lansing.	2/5	4/5
Q2. The available housing in East Lansing is of acceptable quality.	3/5	4/5

## Survey Comments

"I would like to see some housing acts ensuring better quality of housing in the north neighborhoods for students"

"Would love to see more affordable off-campus housing options that are still within a walkable distance to the university."

"I myself will be moving out of East Lansing next year to find more affordable housing in surrounding cities."





Housing feedback from the Sticky-Note Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and sub-topic into a tree map (Figure 12). Students who participated in the Sticky-Note Workshops overall felt negative about housing topics. Affordable housing was a pressing concern for many students and it is the most mentioned topic with 14 comments. Students also had concerns relating to the quality of housing and felt the housing market in the area was predatory towards students and other young demographics.



Figure 12: Sticky-Note Housing Data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

Housing feedback from the Discussion Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and sub-topic into a tree map (Figure 13). Overall, the Discussion Workshop participants felt negative about the housing in East Lansing. Participants mentioned that the location of the housing and its proximity near campus was desirable. However, there were similar concerns with affordable housing and it was the most mentioned topic with 10 comments. Students also voiced concerns about the housing being outdated and low quality relative to the price paid in rent.

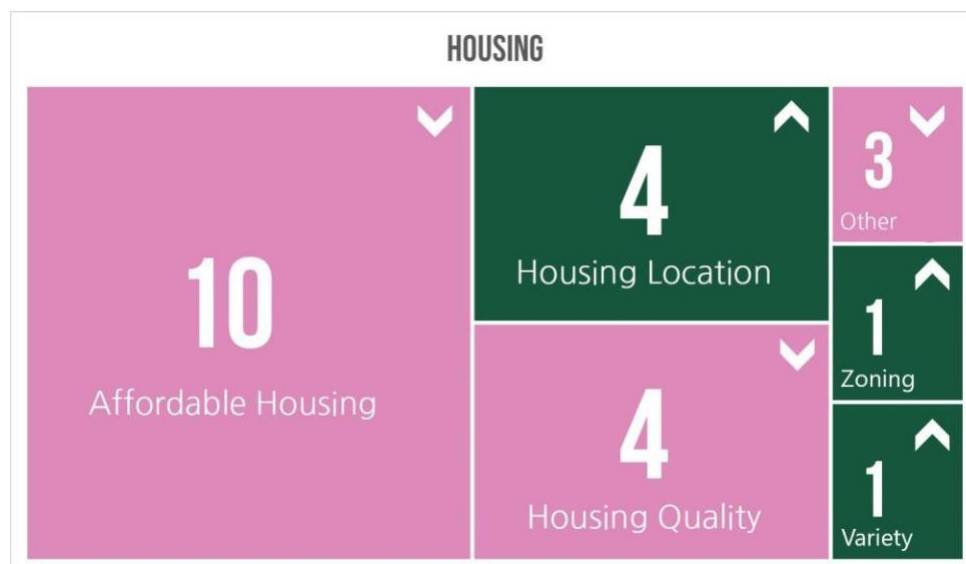


Figure 13: Discussion Workshop Housing Data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



**Housing Affordability in East Lansing**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recognizes affordable housing as “housing a household can afford spending no more than 30% of their income”. Households that spend more than 30% on housing are categorized as cost-burdened, and households that spend more than 50% of their income on housing are considered severely cost-burdened. As such, the median household income plays a significant role in determining what level of housing is affordable in an area. The overall median household income has followed a similar trend to the State of Michigan and the nation overall over the last two decades. In 2022 in East Lansing according to census data was \$41,177 annually. However, there is often a significant difference when comparing the household income of householders under 25 to the overall median. Nearly 82% of MSU students are under the age of 25 and as such this report considers the under-25 median income of \$21,484 when discussing housing affordability for student groups. Table 1 shows the median household income by age for 2022 and householders under 25 had a significantly lower median income of \$21,484.

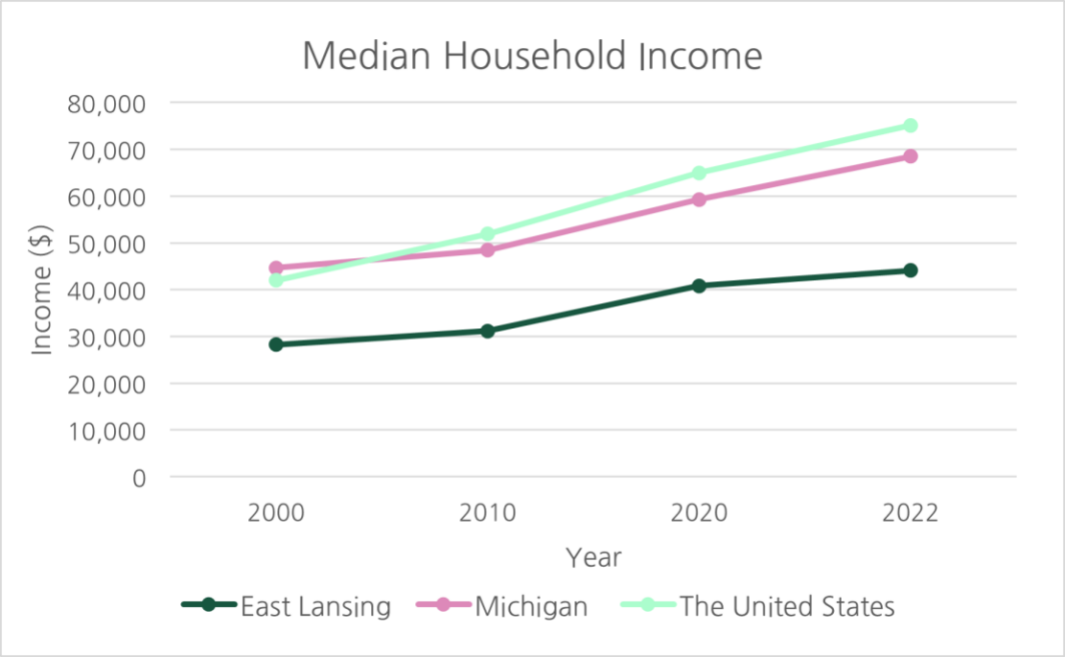


Figure 14: East Lansing 2022 Median Household Income. (U.S, Census Bureau 2022)

East Lansing Median Household Income by Age in 2022	
Householder under 25 years	21,484
Householder 25 to 44 years	61,630
Householder 45 to 64 years	115,344
Householder 65 years and over	84,167

Table 1: East Lansing 2022 Median Household Income by Age. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)



In addition to primarily being under the age of 25, students also tend to be renters. The housing landscape in East Lansing reflects this with a significantly higher proportion of renters as more than half of the population occupied a rental unit in 2022. The median rent in East Lansing in 2022 was \$1,016 per month or \$12,192 annually. This means that at least half of renters under the age of 25 in East Lansing are spending nearly 57% of their income on housing.

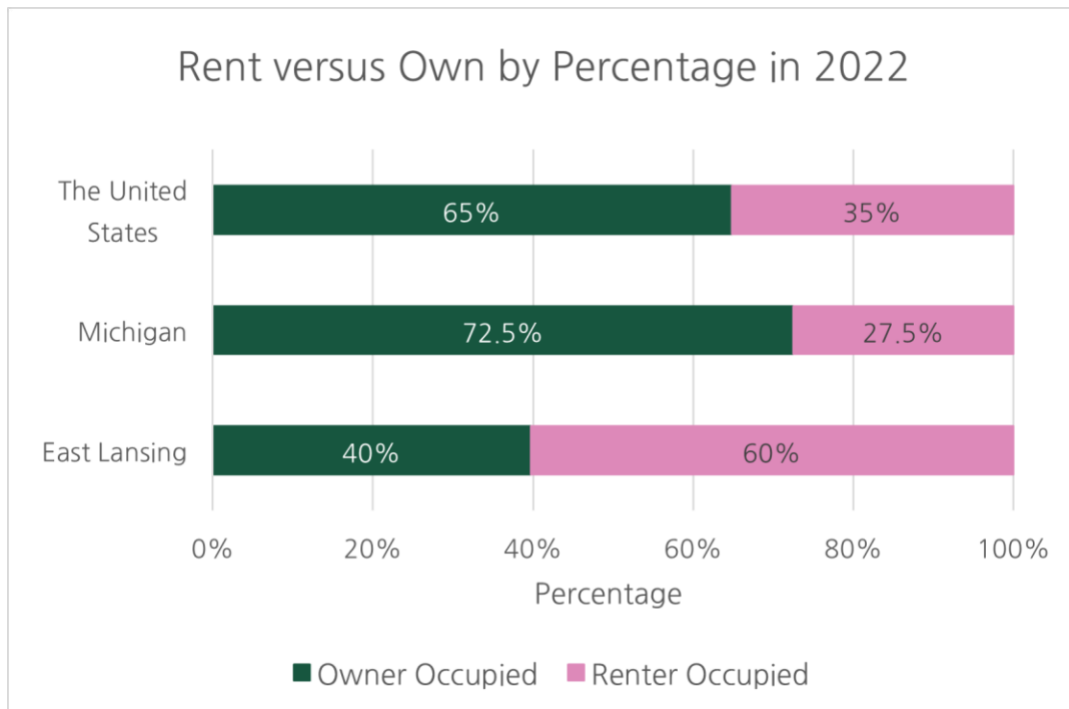


Figure 15: East Lansing Rent Versus Own by Percentage. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

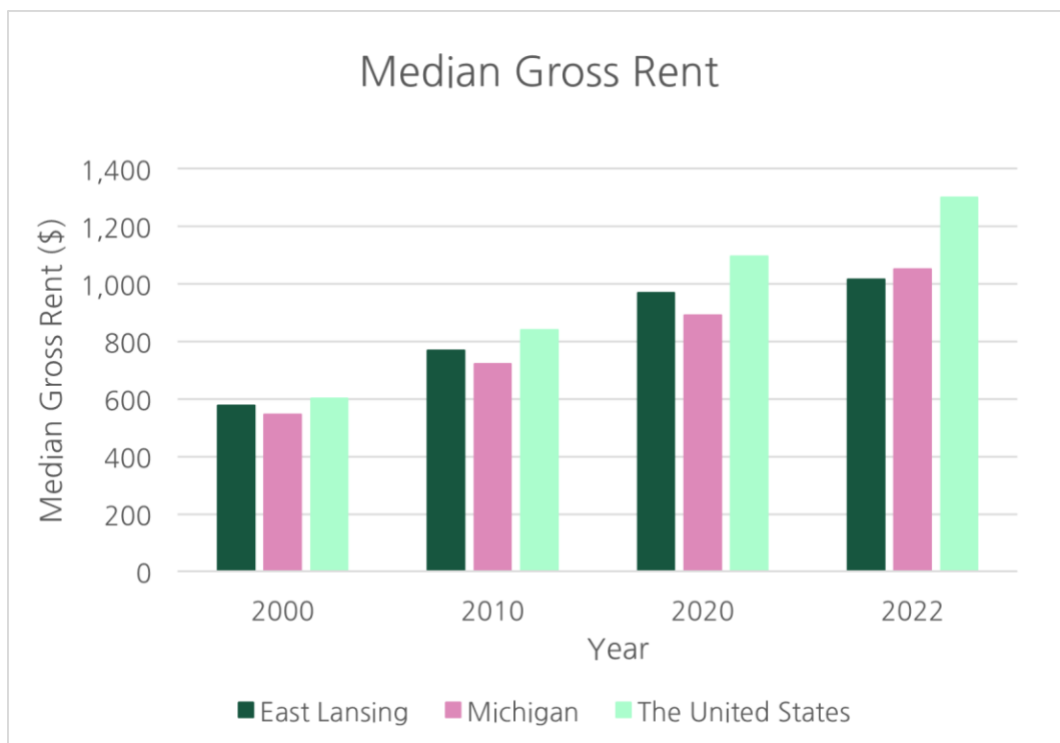


Figure 16: Median Gross Rent. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)



## 1

## Use Flexible zoning language to support diverse affordable housing options.

Housing affordability in a community is not only driven by income and rental rates but also by the supply, demand, and variety of housing. The City of East Lansing can utilize flexible zoning language as a tool to encourage and support a diverse array of affordable housing options. While this practicum report emphasizes housing as it relates to students in the community these tools are relevant to and considerate of the community at large.

### Accessory dwelling units

Accessory dwelling units are one solution that have re-emerged in popularity due to their ability to fit seamlessly into the character of existing neighborhoods and promote economic sustainability both for home-owners and renters. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are well described as a “subordinate dwelling unit which provides living quarters for one individual or a family that is on the same lot, but is separate from the primary dwelling unit.” (Village of Beulah Zoning Ordinance). They have been referred to by other names such as ‘mother-in-law suites’ or ‘granny flats’ but are increasingly recognized as an affordable housing option that benefits both homeowners and the tenants who occupy the rental unit. ADUs can take on several different forms but often manifest as an improved garage loft, basement dwelling, or an additional wing added to an existing home as shown in Figures 17 & 18.



▲ Accessory dwelling units (or ADUs) come in many shapes and styles.



Figures 17 & 18: ADU Formats (AARP, 2021), Example of a garage ADU in Ann Arbor (MLive, 2023)

The Practicum Team recommends that the City of East Lansing consider expanding the allowance of ADU's to lots that may not meet the requirements of the city's Neotraditional Neighborhood zoning which is the only zoning distinction that currently allows for them. Particularly lots that are in closer proximity to the MSU campus, the downtown area, and neighborhoods that have an existing presence of rental housing. Additionally, the team believes it could be beneficial for the city to consider both owner-occupied and absentee-owner options and look at restriction options on short-term rentals. These options could then be reflected in the permitting process and can help maintain a balance between flexible zoning and the appropriate use and placement of ADU's.



## Actions

### Near (0-6 months)

- Identify model ordinance language such as the AARP ADU Model Local Ordinance and where it fits into the context of the East Lansing Zoning Ordinance. (AARP, 2021)
- Gather community input to identify further benefits and challenges.
- Identify appropriate target areas for ADU's based on current housing and community feedback.

### Mid-term (6-12 months)

- Propose an ADU amendment to the city council.
- Create an ADU permit form and determine the procedure for approval of permits and unit inspections.

### Ongoing

- Continuously monitor and analyze the effectiveness of the ADU program. Compile information on the quantity of applications received, those that are accepted or rejected, the number of units built, and any problems or obstacles faced. Review the program on a regular basis to determine its efficacy.
- Make any necessary changes or additions to the ADU regulations, permitting processes, design guidelines, or incentive programs based on the data gathered and feedback from stakeholders such as homeowners, community groups, and developers.
- Create long-term plans to align the ADU program with the city's overarching housing objectives, like boosting the supply of affordable housing, encouraging mixed-income communities, or attending to housing requirements (such as those associated with an elderly population or multi-generational households).

### Expected Benefits

- An increase in affordable housing options for residents of all ages.
- Opportunity for homeowners to benefit from rental income.
- Promotes home ownership and rental options simultaneously.
- A housing option that preserves the character of neighborhoods and does not consume additional open space.
- A housing option that encourages renovation and revitalization of existing housing stock.

### Programs/Funding

- **The Community and Economic Development Division administers the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.**

CDBG is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and administered by states and local governments. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024), the City of East Lansing received \$462,406 in CDBG funding. CDBG funds are intended to address the needs of low-to-moderate-income East Lansing residents through individual and neighborhood investment.

- **Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Home Improvement Program.** MSHDA provides loans and grants to qualified homeowners in Michigan for necessary house repairs and renovations. Residents of East Lansing can apply for help under this program to address significant repair needs.



- **The Michigan Housing Opportunities Promoting Energy-Efficiency (MI-HOPE) program**

Through this program, organizations can apply for grants of \$100,000 to \$1 million. The awards are awarded to proposals that foster cooperative collaborations and strategic strategies to employ program monies to support the greatest number of households. Energy efficiency-focused repairs and renovations to owner-occupied and non-owner-occupied single-family houses as well as multifamily structures with up to three units can be made possible by grants. The program sets the total amount of assistance at \$25,000 for either a non-owner-occupied unit or an owner-occupied house.

## Resources

- ABCs of ADUs: A Guide to Accessory Dwelling Units and How They Expand Housing Options for People of All Ages by AARP.
- Accessory Dwelling Units: A Step by Step Guide to Design and Development by AARP
- Accessory Dwelling Units: Model State Act and Local Ordinance by the AARP
- Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADUs) Case Study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Accessory Dwelling Units – Knowledgeable Collection by the American Planning Association
- Accessory Dwelling Units – Quick Notes by the American Planning Association
- A Guide to Building a Backyard Cottage by the City of Seattle
- AccessoryDwellings.Org

## Community Benefits Agreements

Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) are another tool that East Lansing could leverage to not only provide affordable housing but an array of other public benefits. A CBA is a binding contract between a developer and a city or organization. In the past CBAs have been organized by neighborhood groups or non-profits but more recently cities such as Ypsilanti and Detroit have included requirements and language for these agreements right into their zoning ordinance. In exchange for city assistance or land, a developer agrees to provide a public good such as remediating a brownfield or building affordable housing. The city can utilize this as a tool to ensure some land is set aside for affordable housing projects.

## Actions

### Near (0-6 months)

- Identify model ordinance language and where it fits into the context of the East Lansing Zoning Ordinance.
- Identify benefits, challenges, and gather community input through community engagement.
- Determine primary funding sources and taxes needed to fund CBA agreements.

### Mid-Term (6-12 months)

- Propose an ADU amendment to the city council.
- Create an ADU permit form and determine the procedure for approval of permits and unit inspections.



### Expected Benefits

- Opportunity for communities to be more involved in project proposals and site design.
- Supports development that provides a public good through relaxed zoning or funding support.
- Can be tailored to meet the specific needs of East Lansing.
- Lower risk for developers due to the nature of having community support and a binding contract.

### Programs/Funding

- Donations and non-profit organizations.
- Payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT).
- Partnerships with local banks for mortgages.

### Resources

- Overview of Community Benefits Agreements - Michigan State University Center for Community & Economic Development
- Community Benefits Agreements - Urban Institute
- Community Benefit Agreement Toolkit - U.S. Office of Energy, Justice, and Equity

### CASE STUDY

In 2020, the City of Ypsilanti offered a developer to make smaller payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) on rent revenue for providing affordable housing to tenants that make less than 60% AMI. The project was part of a PUD and featured a CBA agreement between the developer and the City of Ypsilanti. The project was not constructed at the time of this report writing however the current approved site plan will result in over 20 ‘missing middle’ housing units that are affordable for those making 40-80% of the area median income (City of Ypsilanti, 2024). These units will provide an increase in tax revenue for the city and open living opportunities for middle and lower income families in a neighborhood where they did not exist before.

### PUDs & Cluster Zoning

Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and cluster zoning are tools that the City of East Lansing already uses and the Practicum Team recommends the continued allowance and encouragement of these types of developments. PUDs and cluster zoning allow for creativity and flexibility in site plan design that can result in a mix of housing options that would not be possible otherwise. The ordinance language can continue to be tailored to the needs of the city and encourage outcomes that align with the city’s Comprehensive Plan and long term housing plan.



## 2

## Support Cooperative Code Enforcement Measures and Home Improvement Programs.

The second most mentioned topic by student respondents involved concerns about housing quality. While many areas have well-maintained homes and apartments, other neighborhoods, particularly those with a large concentration of student housing, may be susceptible to property neglect or upkeep challenges. The city's most direct avenue for ensuring housing quality is through code enforcement. In addition to the city's current policies and procedures for code enforcement, incorporating proactive and cooperative enforcement measures can help ensure tenant safety, promote community health, and boost neighborhood vibrancy. Additionally, by continuing to promote funds for home repairs, the city can improve housing quality and guarantee that all citizens have access to safe, quality, and affordable housing.

### Actions

#### Near (0-6 Months)

- Organize outreach and education programs to educate owners of rental properties on the value of prompt maintenance and repairs in maintaining a safe environment and safeguarding their investment.
- Create a comprehensive rental property maintenance checklist that includes common repair areas such as plumbing, electricity, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC), appliances, and structural aspects. Distribute this checklist to the owners.
- Establish a pro-active rental inspection program to find properties that still require repairs and provide owners with information about available repair options.
- Provide a hotline or procedure for emergency rental repair so that owners may promptly handle critical safety hazards such as gas leaks and sewage backups.

#### Mid-Term (6-12 Months)

- Analyze the success of the first rental property repair assistance program, get owner input, and make any required adjustments.
- Utilize technological tools (mobile apps, web portals) to improve the rental inspection program, allowing for more effective recording and follow-up on identified maintenance needs.
- Establish a rental property rating system based on the findings of inspections to encourage maintenance upgrades and encourage the public to identify well-maintained residences.

#### Long-Term (12+ Months)

- Conduct frequent assessments of local housing codes and policies, making recommendations for improvements to improve rental housing quality and repair requirements.
- Look into bulk purchasing of widely used repair materials/equipment to provide owners with reduced prices.
- Create long-term affordable housing preservation plans that involve finance for major capital enhancements and renovations in aged rental units.



- Improve data tracking and analysis of rental property conditions, maintenance needs, and program efficacy to inform future initiatives.

### Expected Benefits

Maintain habitable living conditions for tenants.

Protect the investment of owners.

Avoiding legal liabilities and penalties.

Improve the satisfaction of tenants.

Enhance the value of the property and the stability of the neighborhood.

### Funding Opportunities

#### • **State Emergency Relief (SER) Program**

Can assist with repairs for furnaces, hot water heaters, septic systems and other non-energy related repairs needed to remedy unsafe living conditions. The funds are available to low-income homeowners and renters and can be applied through MI Bridges ([michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov))

#### • **Home Improvement Grants (HUD/USDA)**

The Home Investment Partnerships Program provides grants to state/local governments for affordable housing activities including home rehabilitation. The USDA Section 504 program offers loans up to \$40,000 and grants up to \$10,000 for very low-income rural homeowners for repairs.

#### • **Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Home Improvement Program.**

The MSHDA Property Improvement Program (PIP) provides loans to help Michigan homeowners make repairs, improvements, and energy efficiency upgrades to their homes. Residents of East Lansing can apply for help under this program to address significant repair needs.

### Eligibility Requirements:

- Homeowners must have equity in their home.
- Annual household income cannot exceed \$105,700.
- Minimum credit score of 620 (660 for larger loan amounts).
- The home must be the borrower's primary residence located in Michigan.
- Can be either a single-family home or manufactured home.
- Eligible Improvements:
  - Repairs/replacements that improve livability, safety, or utility of the home.
  - Major systems repairs (roof, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, etc.)
  - Energy efficiency upgrades (insulation, windows, appliances, etc.)
  - Accessibility modifications
- Loan Terms:
  - Loan amounts vary based on property type and improvements.
  - Loan terms up to 20 years.



# Transportation

According to the responses received in the student engagement, students overall are pleased with the job the city has done of providing adequate, affordable, and flexible transportation on campus. From the expansive bus system that runs at nearly all hours of the day, all week long, to the safe ride options available late at night, travel is made accessible from North to South and East to West on campus. However, students feel that the off-campus transportation is expensive and not accessible.

The student engagement survey asked respondents three questions relating to transportation in the City of East Lansing. The median score for recycling access and healthy food access were both three out of five. Student opinions on health resources available in the city had a median value of four out of five.

## Survey Questions

	Overall Rating	Importance Rating
Q1. The public transportation is adequate in the City of East Lansing.	3/5	4/5
Q2. The City of East Lansing is pedestrian friendly.	4/5	5/5
Q3. The City of East Lansing is a safe place to travel by bike.	3/5	3/5

## Survey Comments

"I hope the bus routing off campus is also free for students."

"Integrate bike lanes into the sidewalks or anything to get them out of the path of buses"

"Connect East Lansing with Lansing more."





Transportation data from the Sticky-Note Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 19). Students felt that East Lansing was walkable but could improve the safety of bike lanes and crosswalks, particularly on Grand River Avenue. Students expressed a desire for more routes off-campus and more access to off-campus locations. Many students felt that the off-campus transportation should be free or cheaper like it is on the MSU campus, additionally citing the inconvenience of having to carry change for the bus.



Figure 19: Sticky-Note Workshop Transportation data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

Transportation data from the Discussion Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 20). Students felt good overall about the walkability in East Lansing but did express a few concerns about unsafe bike lanes and crosswalks. Students have mixed feelings about the bus system, they like the way that it runs on the campus but feel there is a gap off-campus. Parking was another area of concern for students with the most common issue being the price of parking and lack of access to overnight parking.

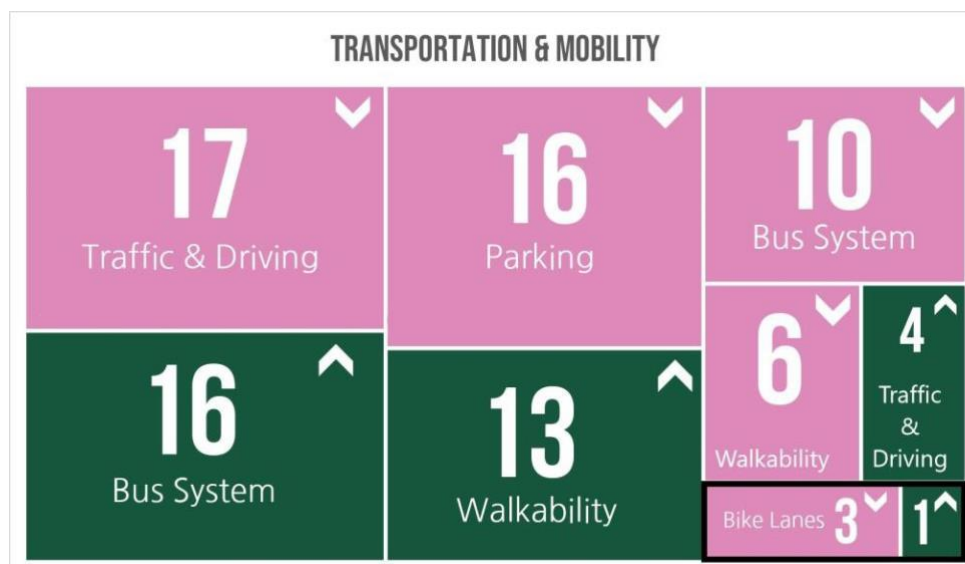


Figure 20: Discussion Workshop Transportation data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



## Off-Campus Public Transit in East Lansing

The Practicum Team determined that there are 10 routes that connect the MSU campus to off-campus locations: 1, 15, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 48. These routes go to a variety of places, and despite an overall approval of the job CATA does currently, the Practicum Team was able to identify gaps in the frequency of stops at select locations. As such, we recommend that the city use its resources to promote, and build upon, the current system through educational material and more frequent run times. Figure 21 highlights the current CATA system in the greater Lansing area.

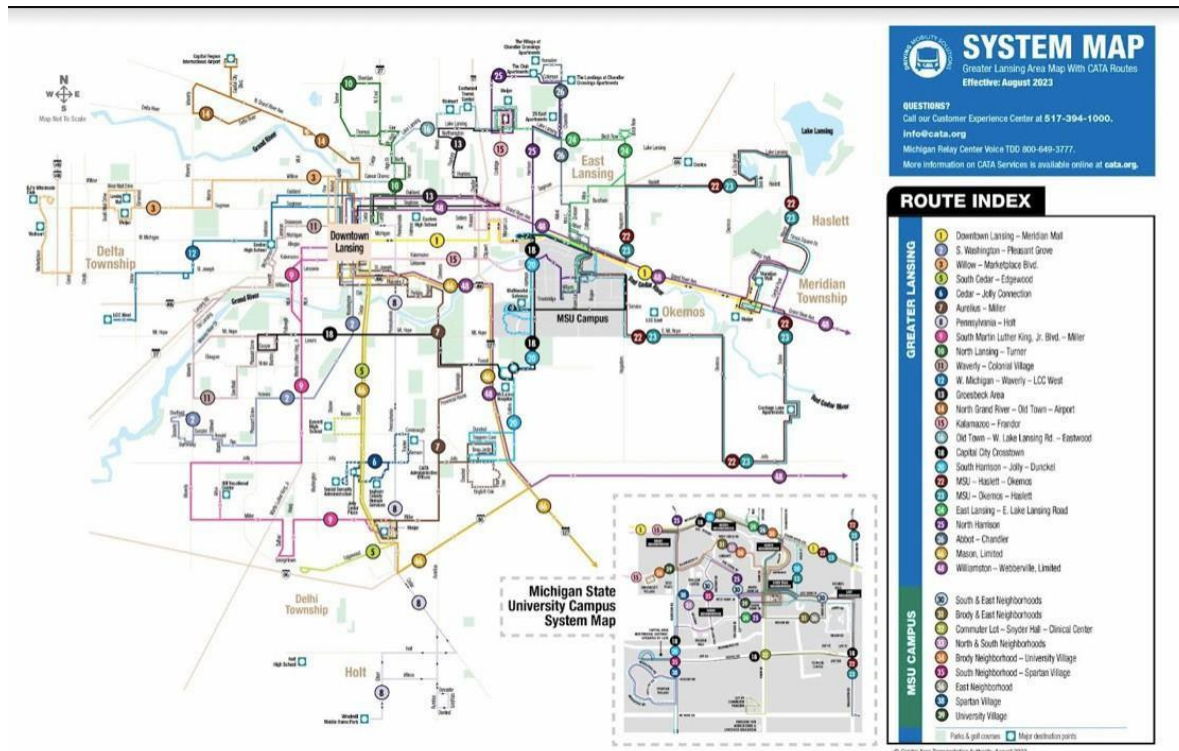


Figure 21: CATA bus system in the greater Lansing area.(CATA, 2024)

**Route #1:** Travels from the Meridian mall and to downtown Lansing. Rides are available from 6:20 AM until 10:30 PM, and stops every 15-20 minutes. This totals about 44 stops per day between the Meridian mall and CATA transportation center per day.

**Route #15:** Connects East Kalamazoo street to downtown Lansing. It is available from 6:40 AM until 6:40 PM and is available Monday through Friday. The bus stops every hour at the East Kalamazoo location. The practicum team recommends cutting that frequency in half to once every half hour.

**Route #18:** Connects East Lansing's Multi modal Gateway near Trowbridge, through Mt. Hope. Rides are available from 6:45 AM until 10:30 PM, Monday through Friday, and runs every 45 minutes.

**Route #20:** Connects South Harrison to the intersection of Jolly and Ducknell Road. The route is available from 7:15 AM until 10:25 PM on Monday-Friday, and is also available on the weekends. Stopping at a frequency of every 35 minutes, route #20 is a good option for students and East Lansing residents looking to travel off campus south of East Lansing.



Routes #22 & 23: Route #22 runs westbound from Haslett to the MSU campus. Route #23 picks up at the MSU campus and circles through Okemos back to Haslett near the Lake Lansing Park. The routes are available Monday through Saturday from 6:05 am until 9:20 pm. During the week you can find the route running every half hour, whereas on Saturday the route is only available once per hour.

Route #24 & #25: These two routes run in a loop from East Lansing to Lake Lansing Road from 6:45 AM until 10:55 PM Monday through Friday. There is also weekend availability starting at the same time and ending at 10:00 PM on Saturday and 6:00 PM on Sunday. There are 31 stops along the routes, which connect students to a variety of off-campus housing locations, as well as the Lake Lansing Meijer. The route runs every 35-60 minutes during the week and every 60-90 minutes on weekends.

Route #26: Connects Abbott road to Chandler Crossings, a major off-campus apartment complex. The route consists of 26 stops and is available Monday through Saturday. During the week the route runs every 15-30 minutes, and on Saturday you can find it running about every 40 minutes. This unique route provides students with transportation directly to their apartment complex, at an efficient rate.

### **Non-motorized Safety in East Lansing**

Figure 22 shows a map that highlights the number of accidents involving pedestrians in East Lansing in 2022. According to MDOT crash reports in 2022, the highest concentrations of these accidents occurred along East Grand River and Abbott,

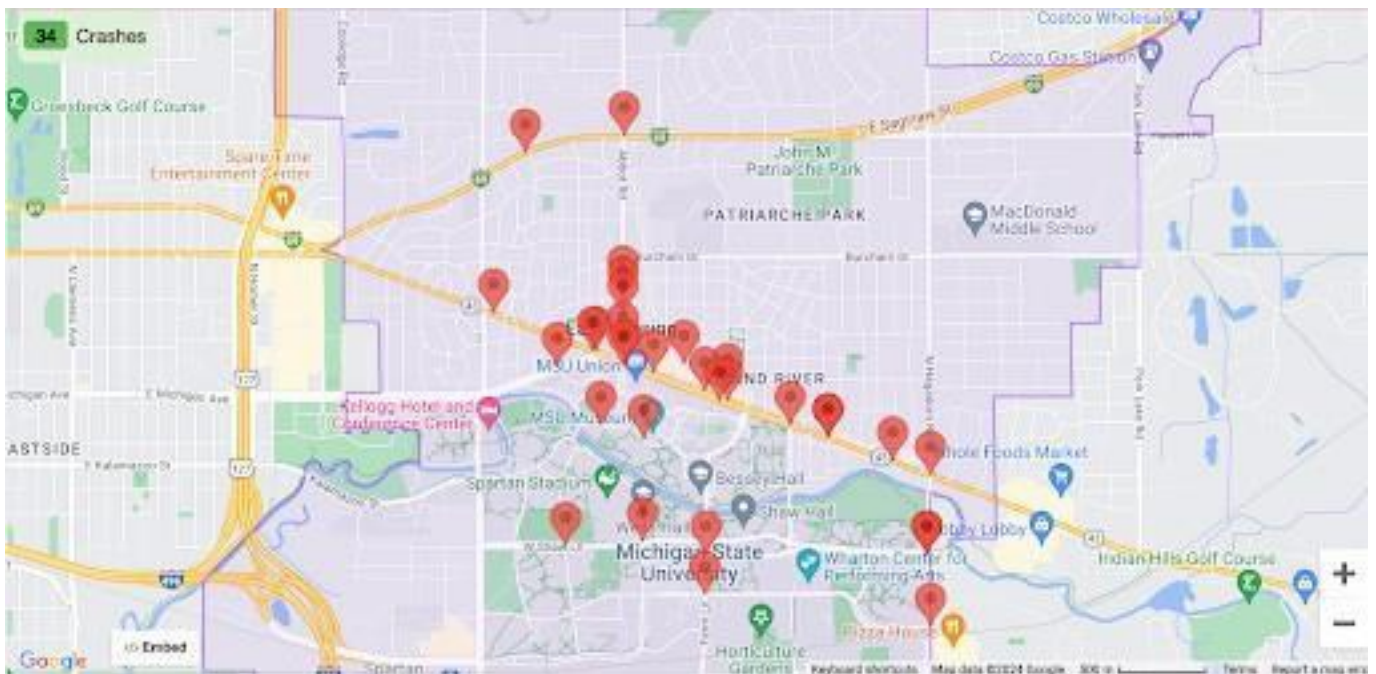


Figure 22: Motor vehicle crash locations involving a pedestrian or cyclist. (MichiganTrafficFacts, 2022)



## 3

## Emphasize & Enhance Off-Campus Transportation Options.

Based on student feedback, the Practicum Team's proposal aims to enhance off-campus transportation options for Michigan State University students. Through the promotion of current bus routes and distribution of informational material during semester orientation, the city of East Lansing can promote the existing options available through the CATA bus system. The Practicum Team also recommends the city use its resources to explore enhancement in certain routes, including increasing the frequency of routes 22 & 23 on weekends outside the winter months, running routes 15 & 18 on the weekends, and increasing the frequency of routes 24 & 25 to provide better access to the Lake Lansing Meijer. The Practicum Team also believes that ride-share programs are an avenue that can be taken advantage of to provide students with a variety of off campus transportation options. By partnering with Michigan State University, the city has the potential to offer a ride-share program to both public school and university students.

### Actions

#### Near Term (0-6 months):

- Launch a marketing campaign targeting students that highlights the off-campus bus system and its current availability. This could include posters, flyers, and digital advertisements across campus.
- Collaborate with the University Student Commission and Transportation Commission on distributing information about the off-campus bus system through word-of-mouth and social media, as well as printed material.
- Expand bus stops to ensure availability within a quarter-mile radius.
- Begin discussions with MSU and companies such as Lyft. Explore the possibility of a joint ride-share program that offers discounted rates to public school and university students.

#### Mid Term (6-12 months):

- Host informational sessions during orientation and enrollment periods to educate incoming students about the bus routes, schedules, and benefits.
- Work with CATA to assess and increase access to local full-line grocery stores.

#### Long Term (12+ months)

- Incorporate ride-share program into cities transportation system.
- Benefits:
  - Improved transportation opportunities for students at Michigan State University.
  - Improved awareness of already available transportation options.
  - Reduced traffic congestion and less cars on the road through the increased use of public transit.



### Funding/Programs

- Partnership between the city and Michigan State University.
- Partnership with private transportation companies such as Lyft.
- With the inclusion of public school students into the ride-share program, funding through property tax becomes an option. With a wide-scale pedestrian infrastructure improvement, further taxes could also be levied on businesses and corporations in the area who will benefit from the extra foot traffic.

### Existing Programs

A strong example of a ride-share partnership in a college town can be found in Columbus Ohio, where in partnership with Lyft, Ohio State University offers a discounted rate for rides to students. The program runs from 7:00AM-7:00PM daily and offers students rides to and from campus at a discounted rate of \$4. Everything is accessible through the Lyft app, where students are able to log-in to their student accounts to receive the discount. Figure 23 is a map from Lyft's website, which highlights the coverage zones in the greater Lansing area.

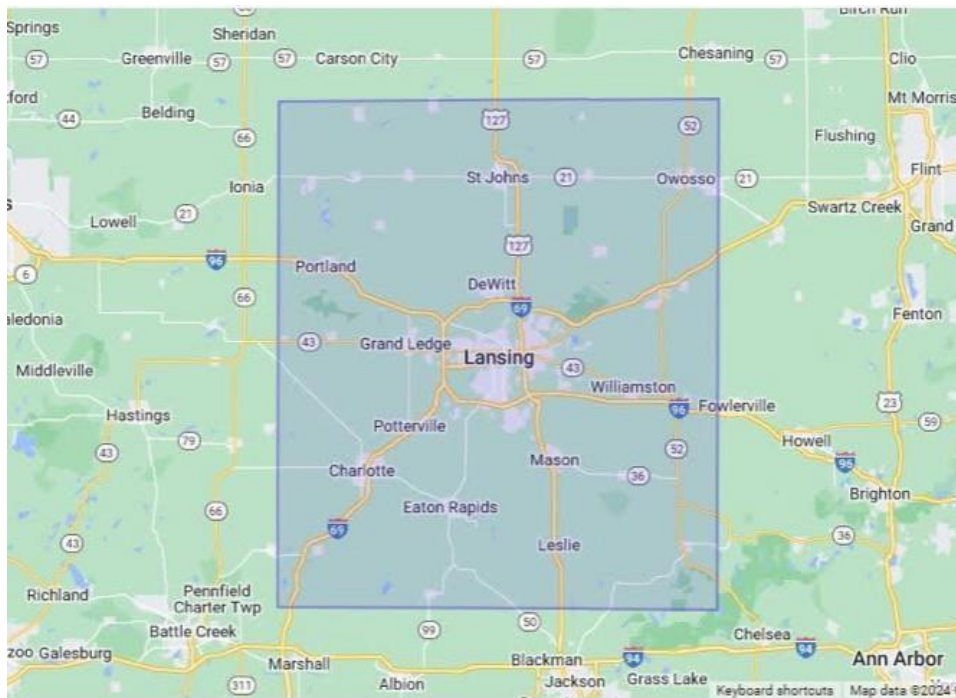


Figure 23: Greater Lansing area Lyft service coverage map. (Lyft, 2024)



## 4

## Increase Non-motorized Pedestrian Safety Through High-visibility Crosswalks & Bike Lanes

The practicum team proposes an increase in pedestrian friendly, and high visibility, infrastructure that helps protect bicyclists and those traveling on foot. By using traffic data provided by MDOT, the team recommends focusing the safety effort along Abbot Road and East Grand River Ave.

Examples of pedestrian friendly infrastructure improvements include rectangular rapid flashing beacons,(RRFBs), pedestrian islands, sidewalk expansion, brightly painted and wider crosswalks and painted bike lanes with bollards. Figure 22 shows an example of what a high-visibility cross-walk improvement could look like along Grand River Ave.

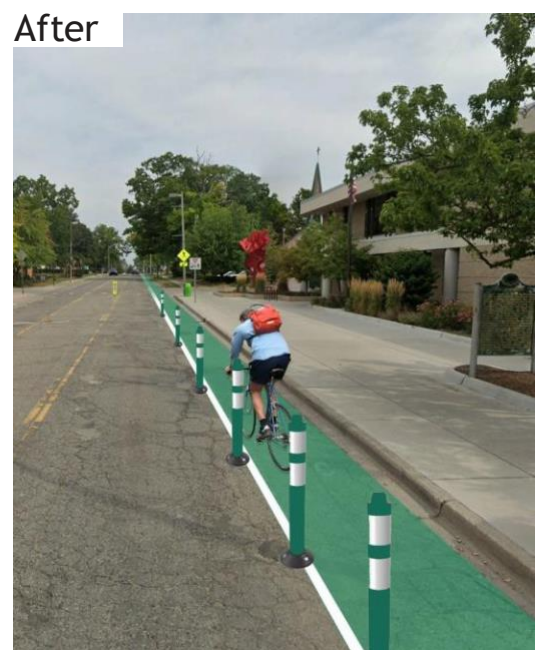
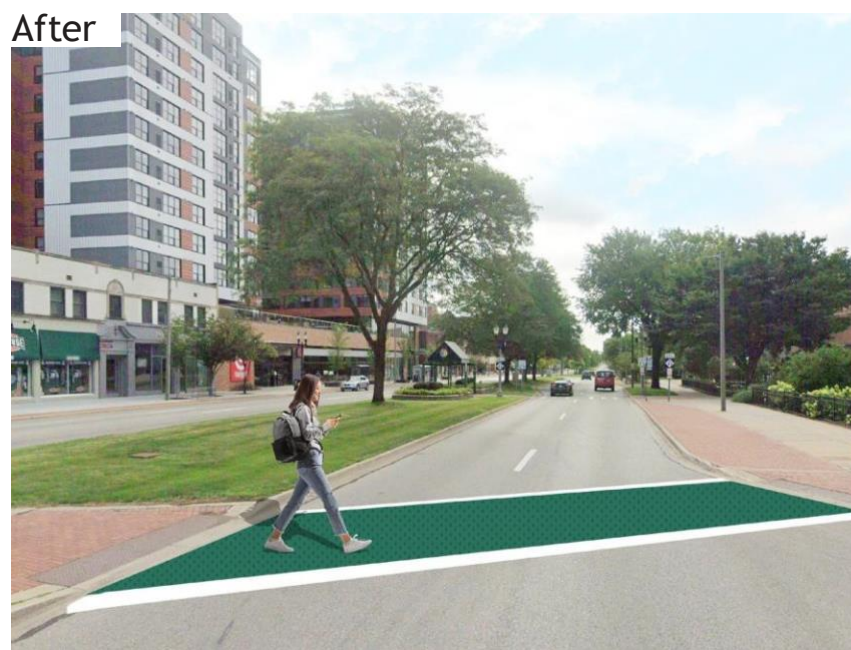


Figure 24: Example improvements on East Grand River Ave. and Abbot Rd. (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



## Actions

### Near Term (0-6 months):

- Support local groups that are already taking on projects to improve pedestrian accessibility both politically and financially.
- Work with the Transportation Commission and the community to identify the list of crosswalks to be improved.

### Mid Term (6-12 months):

- Implement high-visibility crosswalks along East Grand River and Abbott. Prioritizing the areas near downtown and the MSU campus.

### Long Term (12+ months):

- Track crash data to determine effectiveness of crosswalk interventions and use that data to support or direct future initiatives.

## Expected Benefits

- Safer streets for pedestrians by increasing visibility.
- Potential to increase foot traffic in improved areas.
- Improved aesthetic benefit and opportunity for art in the urban landscape.

## Funding/Programs

- MDOT and the “Transportation Alternatives Program” (Transportation Alt. Program ) grant funding.
- US department of transportation “Safe Streets and Roads for All” grant funded program (USDOT SS4A)

## Existing Programs

The East Lansing Safe Routes to School program has been running for over 15 years in the city of East Lansing. Throughout those 15 years the group, made up of paid staff, and volunteers, has helped lead a variety of pedestrian friendly infrastructure improvements. Notably, with support from the Michigan Department of Transportation, they were able to implement crosswalks and sidewalk improvements down Burcham Road.



# Economy & Recreation

The Downtown East Lansing district is the closest commercial recreational hub to the MSU campus. The area is a vibrant blend of mixed residential and commercial uses that is set center stage for student shopping, recreation, and part-time employment opportunities. While the Practicum Team recognizes that there are other commercial hubs in the city such as the Lake Lansing corridor, this report's analysis focuses primarily on the downtown area due to its proximity to the MSU campus and its relevancy to students. As with many commercial engines across the nation, Downtown East Lansing has undergone several changes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last three years, students have come back to campus and the area is picking up where it left off along with some new development primarily along Abbot Road and Albert Avenue. This includes new cafes, restaurants, mini-marts, apartments, and the seasonal installment Albert Al Fresco. Overall, students feel that while the downtown is a lively and interactive environment, there is a gap in recreation that is friendly to under-21s and non-food retail shopping.

The student engagement survey asked respondents two questions relating to economy and recreation in the City of East Lansing. The median score and importance score for access to green-space were rated a 4 out of 5. Notably, when asked about post-graduate employment opportunities, students rated this lower with a 3 out of 5 but also rated it as a lower priority with a 3 out of 5.

## Survey Questions

**Q1. There is adequate access to green-space and recreational activities in the City of East Lansing.**

**Overall  
Rating**

**4/5**

**Importance  
Rating**

**4/5**

**Q2. There are adequate post-graduate employment opportunities in the City of East Lansing.**

**3/5**

**3/5**

## Survey Comments

"I really appreciate the community events, especially during nicer weather. The art fairs, music, and farmers markets are a highlight of EL"

"Encourage a variety of businesses to use the empty spaces downtown outside of just restaurants. I like that a candy store just opened."

"More entertainment besides bars would be beneficial."





Business & Commerce data from the Sticky-Note Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 25). Restaurants and food were positively mentioned 22 times. Students felt good about the amount of food available but expressed a desire for more local establishments as opposed to chains and more food variety outside of fast-food. There was a theme in the activity diversity subtopic of adding more non-bar public places or entertainment businesses that do not involve alcohol.

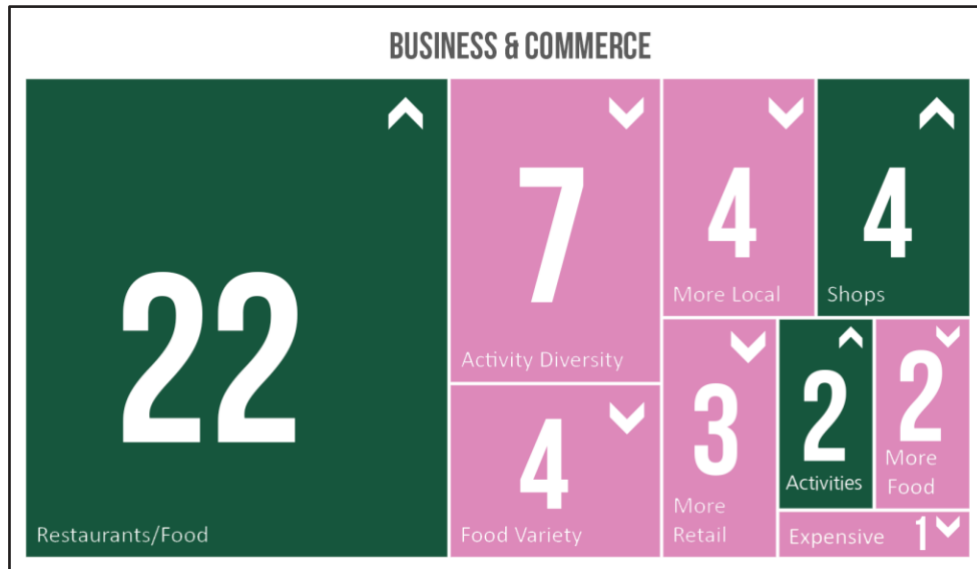


Figure 25: Sticky-Note Business & Commerce data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

Business & Commerce data from the Discussion Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 26). Students expressed a strong desire for more retail shopping and under-21 entertainment with 6 comments each. Specifically, students are looking for additional retail shopping like clothing and accessory stores.

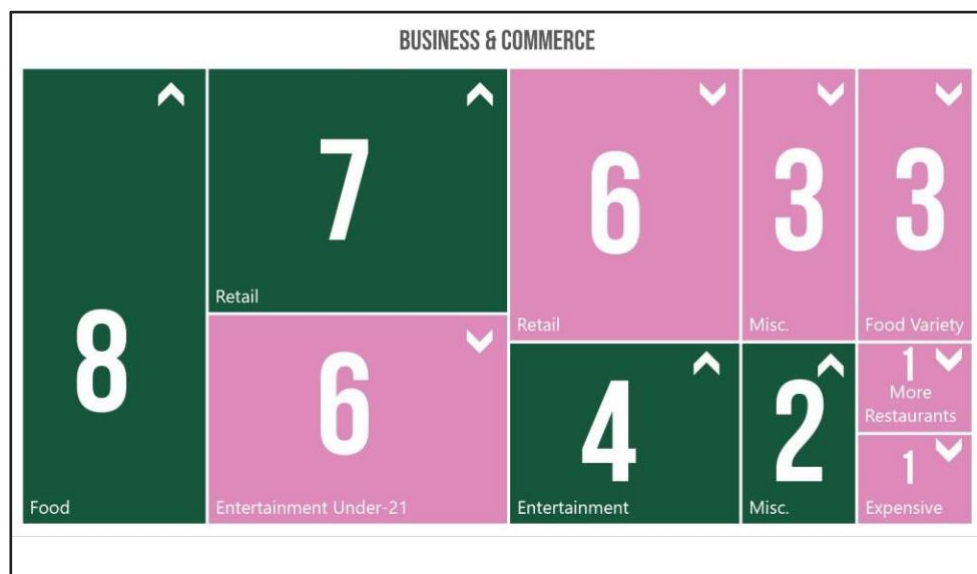


Figure 26: Discussion Workshop Business & Commerce data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



Economic Opportunity data from the Discussion Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 27). This section was broken down into undergrad jobs and post-graduate jobs. There were 7 positive responses relating to undergrad jobs with students mentioning the amount of job opportunities. There were 4 areas of improvement responses in which one student offered the idea of East Lansing having a job fair for students. adding more non-bar public places or entertainment businesses that do not involve alcohol.

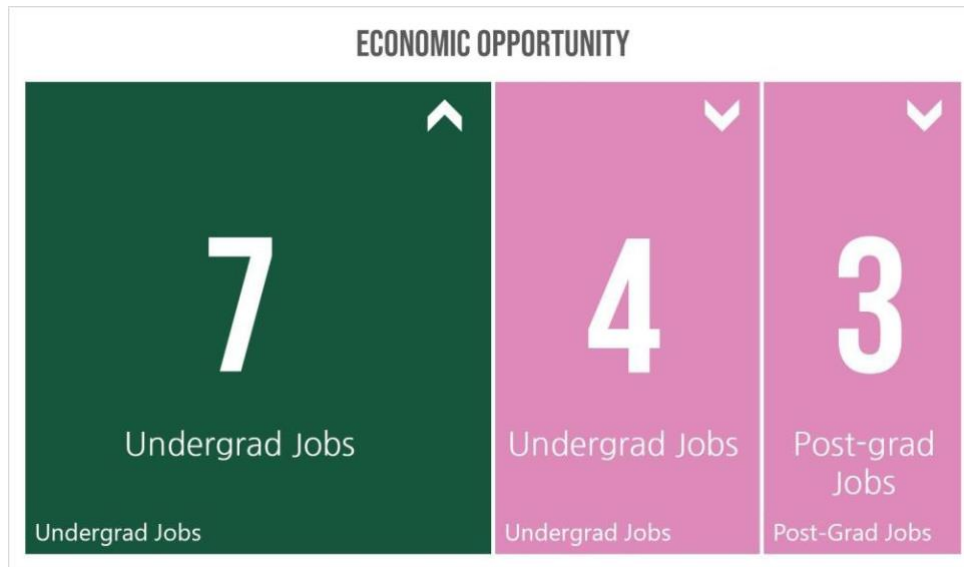


Figure 27: Discussion Workshop Economic Opportunity data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

### **Commerce & Recreation in Downtown East Lansing**

In order to understand more about the commercial dynamics going on in the downtown East Lansing, the MSU Practicum Team performed an analysis on the downtown district by business type (shown in the following pages). Through this analysis, the team determined that the downtown area is primarily dominated by restaurants and fast food, particularly chain establishments. The entertainment is almost solely comprised of bars, night clubs, and other adult venues. Retail shopping is fairly limited in comparison to food establishments both in number and variety. Much of the retail revolves around MSU related gear and sporting style clothing. This is not a problem in and of itself however, students expressed wanting to see more places they can buy accessories, home decor goods, and a wider variety of clothing.



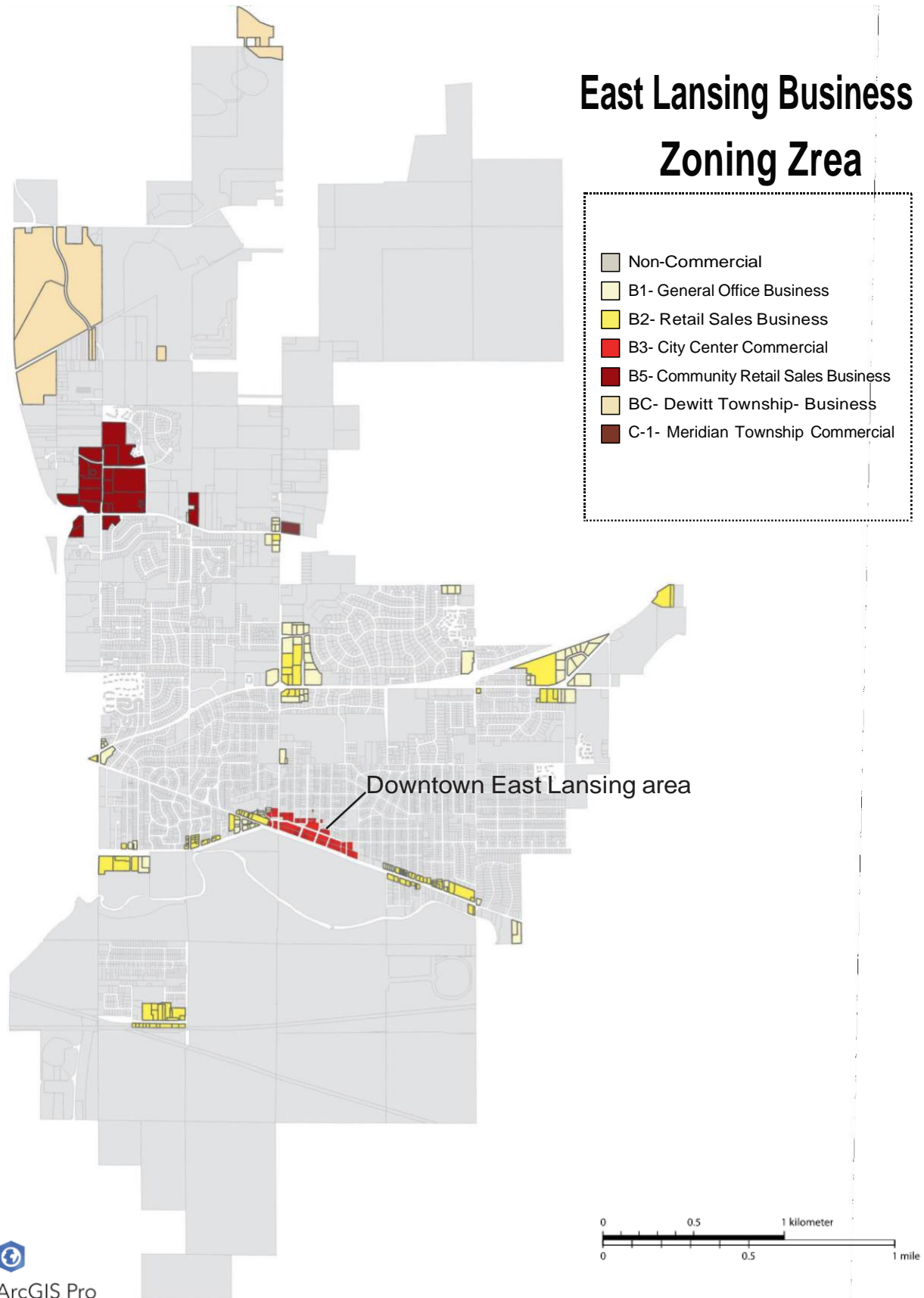


Figure 28: East Lansing business zoning area (City of East Lansing, 2024)



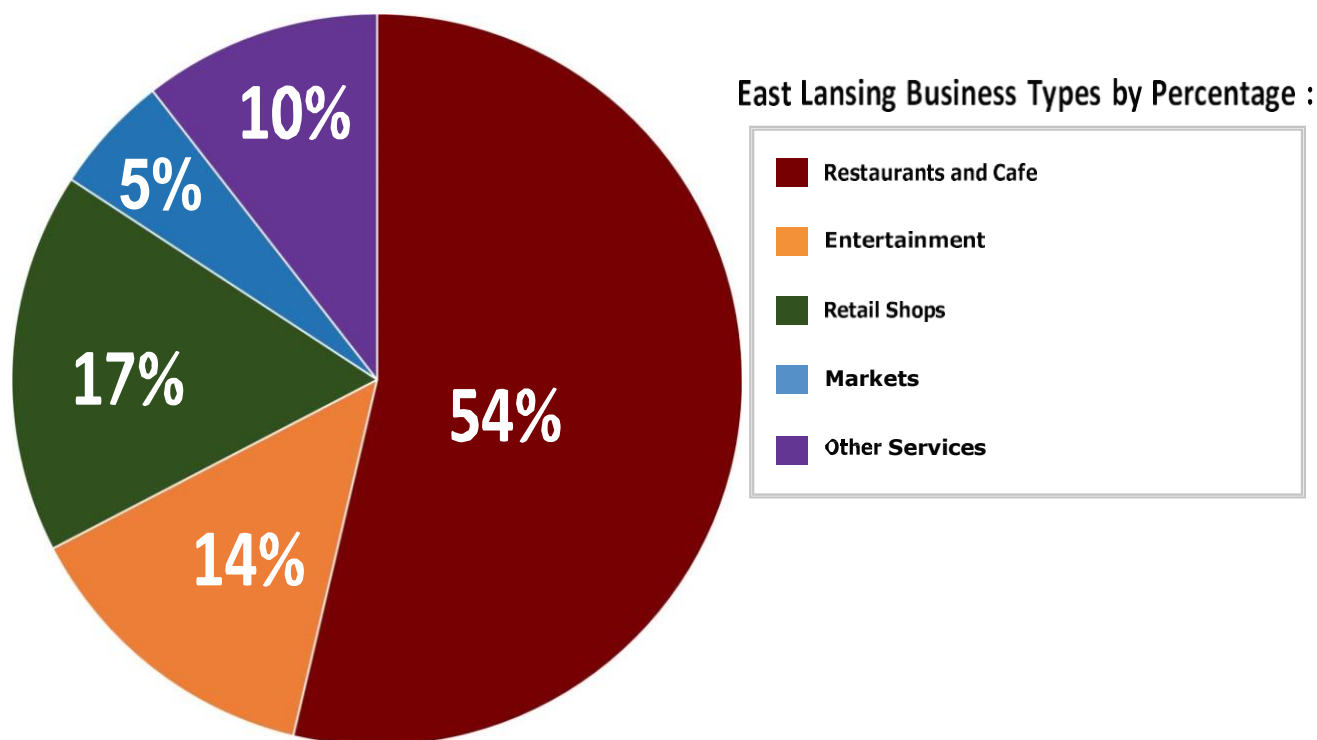


Figure 29: East Lansing Business Types by Percentage (MSU Practicum Team, 2024).

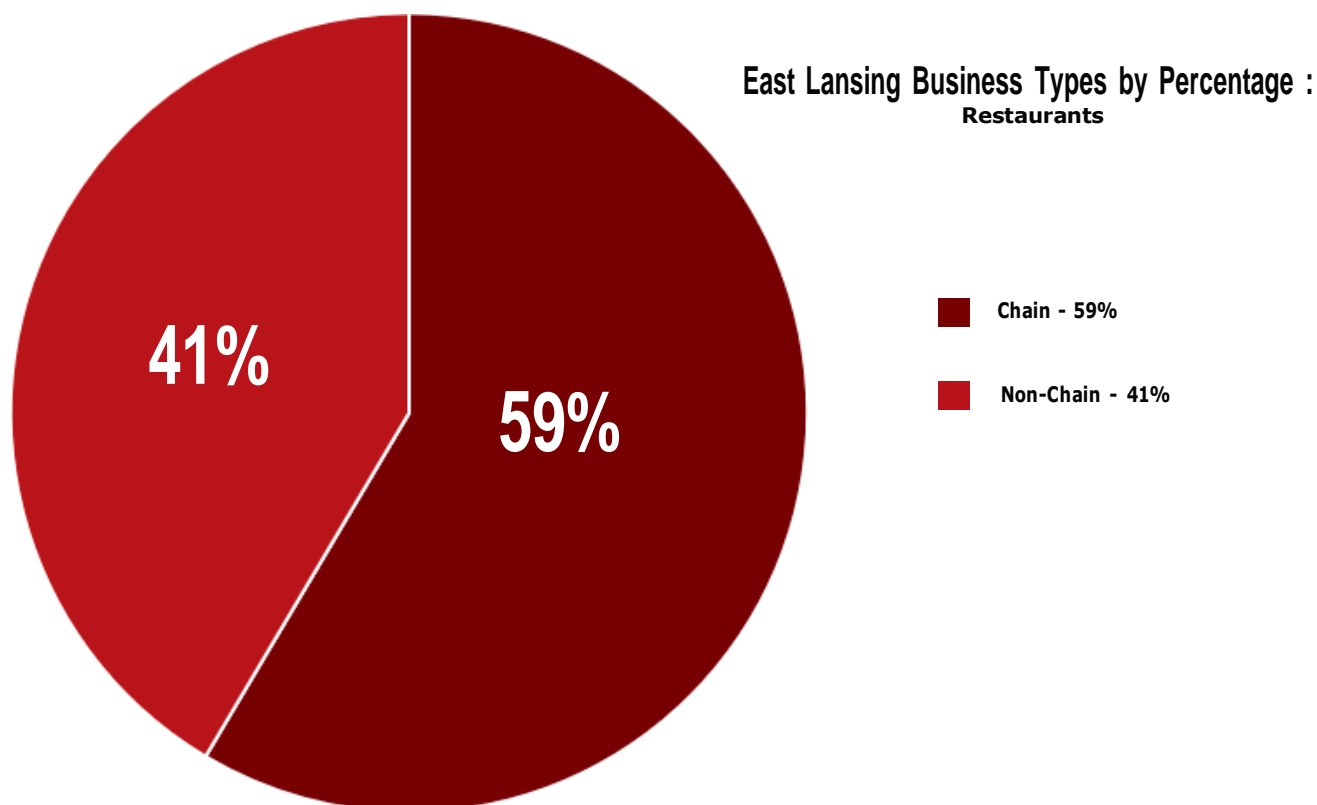


Figure 30: East Lansing Business Types Local and Chain Restaurants by Percentage (MSU Practicum Team, 2024).



# EAST LANSING BUSINESS DISTRICT TYPES- RESTAURANTS & CAFE

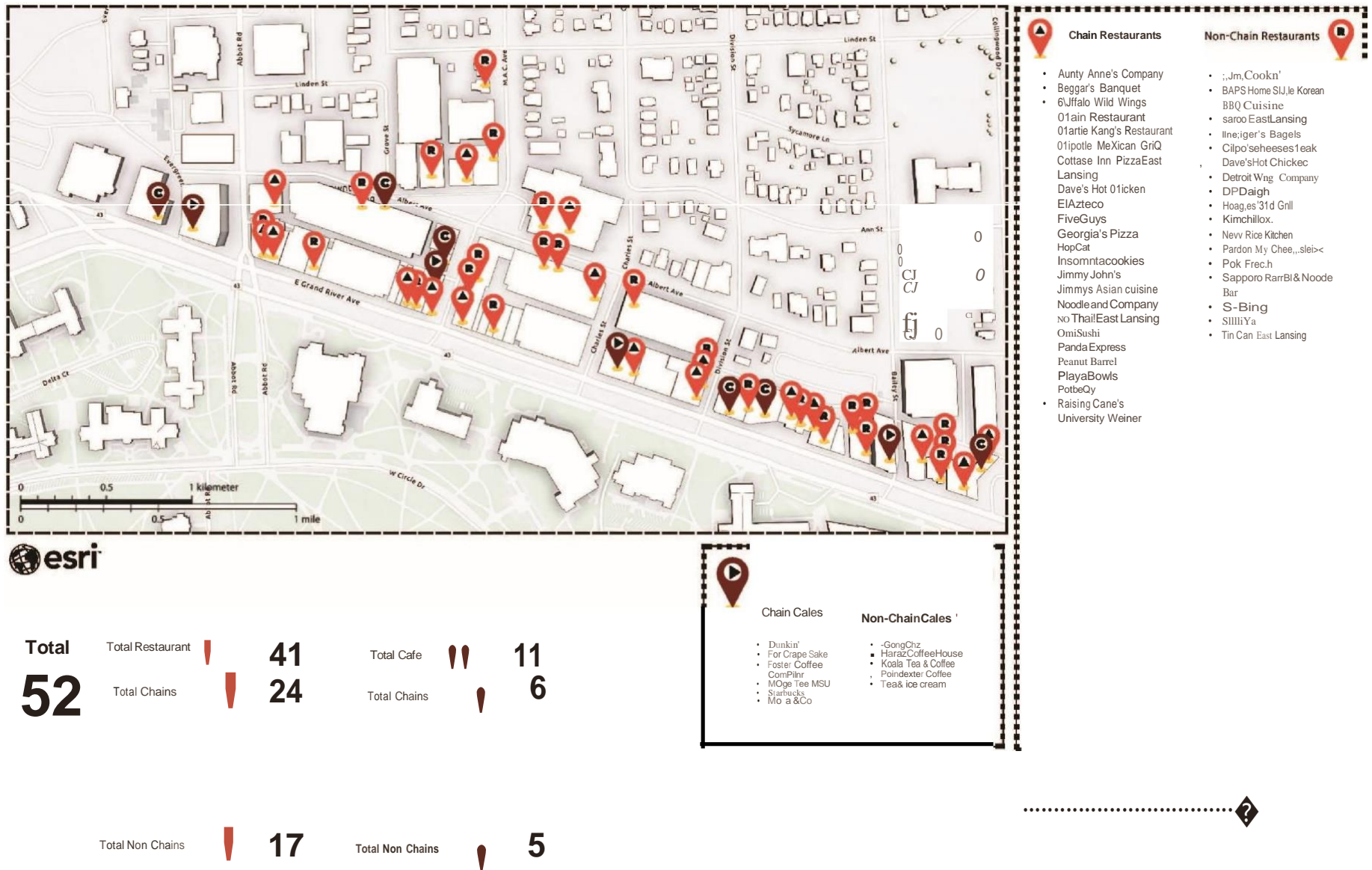
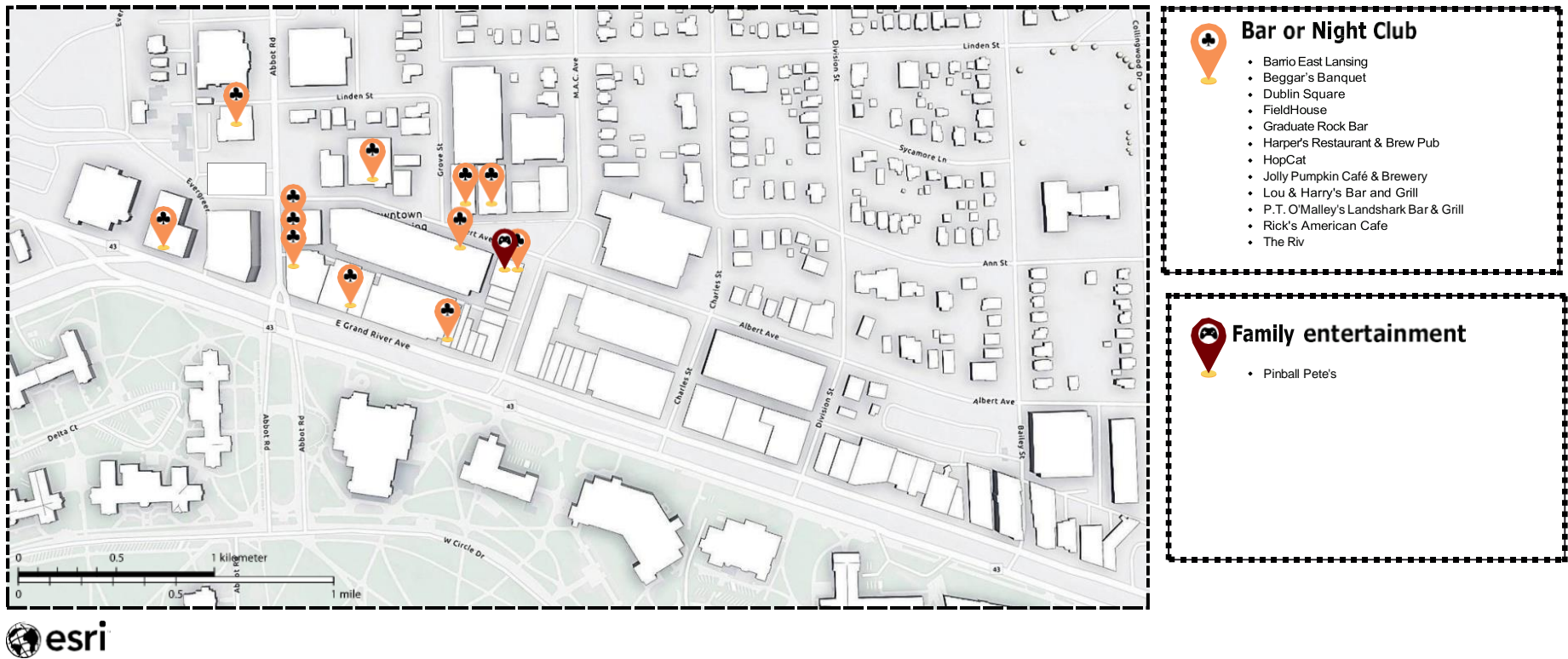


Figure 31: Business District Analysis - Restaurants & Cafes (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



## East Lansing Business District Types- Entertainment



**13** Total      **12** Bar and Night Club      **1** Family entertainment

Figure 32: Business District Analysis - Entertainment (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



# East Lansing Business District Types- Retail shops

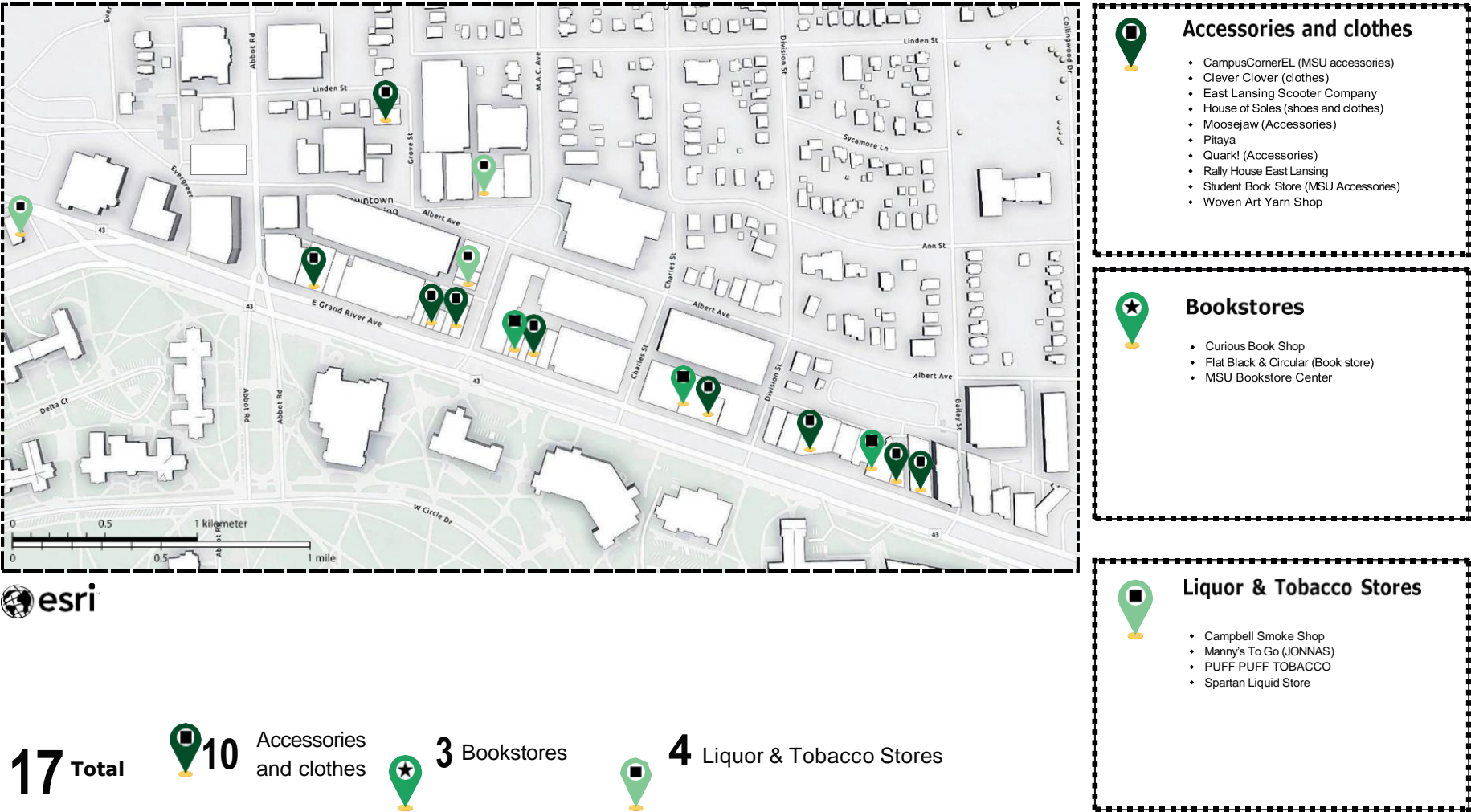


Figure 33: Business District Analysis - Retail Shops (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



# East Lansing Business District Types- Markets

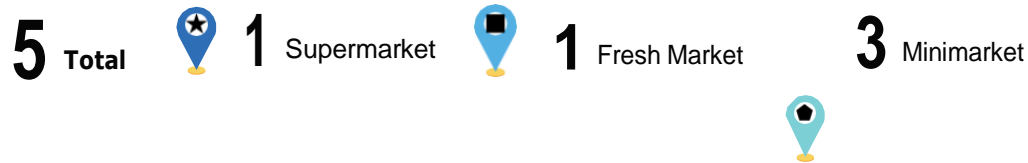


Figure 34: Business District Analysis - Markets (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



# East Lansing Business District Types-Other Services



Figure 35: Business District Analysis - Other Services (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



## 5

## Diversify Recreation with an Emphasis on Under-21, Retail Shopping, & Seasonal Events.

The downtown East Lansing area is lively both during the day and at night, however student feedback indicated that there is an opportunity for the city to fill a gap in under-21 recreation particularly at night and on the weekends. The Practicum Team recommends expanding recreational activities to be more inclusive of the entire student population as well as families and older generations that aren't interested in bars or nightclubs.

### Inclusive Recreation

Student feedback was helpful in generating ideas and suggestions for these activities. The Practicum Team composed the following list of potential activities to expand or include:

- Outdoor or indoor theater for all ages like the movie nights offered in Valley Court Park.
- Bowling, after the closing of the MSU Union bowling alley the nearest bowling alley to the downtown area is the Spare Time Entertainment Center which is a 33-minute walk.
- Arcades
- Late-night cafes
- Art studios & craft workshops
- Yoga/Meditation/Dance Studios

### **Actions**

Near (0-6 months)

- Gather input from community members, local businesses, and relevant stakeholders to identify interests, preferences, and feasibility of various recreational activities.
- Based on research findings and community feedback, determine the interest for different recreational activities suitable for all ages.

Ongoing

- Facilitate the move-in process for the new tenants, providing support for setup and logistics as needed.
- Organize grand opening events and promotions to generate excitement and attract customers to the newly established businesses. Collaborate with local media outlets, community organizations, and student groups to maximize visibility and attendance.

### Expand Seasonal Events

Through engagement, the Practicum Team determined that students are fond of the seasonal events, especially pedestrian friendly installments like Albert El Fresco. Students would like to see these kinds of events emphasized more during the school year and on the weekends. The Practicum Team recommends that the City of East Lansing look into expanding Albert El Fresco into the school year for one weekend per month in the months of September, October, March, and April. The designated weekend could also serve as a good opportunity to coordinate other events and increase outdoor interaction in the downtown area.





Figure 36: Albert El Fresco (City of East Lansing, 2024)

## Actions

Near (0-6 months)

- Gather input from community members, local businesses, and relevant stakeholders to identify interests, preferences, and feasibility of Albert El Fresco during the school year on the weekend.
- Based on research findings and community feedback, determine the appropriate frequency, size, and boundary of an Albert El Fresco expansion.
- Identify seasonal events like the summer concert series that could be expanded into early fall or late spring.

## Increase Non-food Retail

Students felt that the downtown landscape had plenty of fast-food and restaurant options but that there were limited options for retail and other shopping. Student groups expressed specifically wanting more clothing and accessory stores. Research shows that local governments can play a role in attracting a unique and lively retail scene through social media and city branding (Grimmer, 2023). Marketing the city as an attractive place for local retail shopping through platforms like Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram, and using tools like hashtags could work to further attract additional retail businesses. The Practicum Team believes this could be particularly relevant in East Lansing due to the student demographic's heavy presence on social media.

## Actions

Near (0-6 months)

- Conduct market research to identify suitable locations and assess demand for the proposed retail stores.
- Promote Mixed-Use development in B-3 zoning district to attract more retail establishments.
- Develop a social media and place making campaign plan for marketing East Lansing's shopping scene.

Ongoing

- Monitor social media campaign efforts and work with local business owners to determine future actions and strategies that help support the local retail economy.



# Community Wellness

Community wellness is a concept that touches on a broad array of topics to assess the quality of life of members of a community. This report centers the concept around the topic of public health and access to resources that promote healthy lifestyles and quality environments. This includes the discussion of healthy and fresh food access, the recycling of food and waste materials, and access to mental and physical health resources.

The student engagement survey asked respondents four questions relating to community wellness in the City of East Lansing. The median score for recycling access and healthy food access were both three out of five. Student opinions on safety and health resources available in the city had a median value of four out of five.

## Survey Questions

**Q1. The city of east Lansing offers adequate opportunity for the recycling and reuse of materials.**

Overall  
Rating

3/5

Importance  
Rating

4/5

**Q2. There is adequate access to fresh and healthy food sources in the city of east Lansing.**

3/5

4/5

**Q3. There are adequate health resources available in the city of east Lansing**

4/5

4/5

**Q4. I feel safe walking by myself in the city of east Lansing.**

4/5

5/5

## Survey Comments

"I wish there were more healthy food options."

"I like the nature in the city, it gives me something to do and it helps me mentally."

"I would love more workout facilities such a cycling studio like "soul cycle" or Pilates like "solidcore"!!"





Health and safety data from the Sticky-Note Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 37). The most mentioned topics were safety and access to fresh and affordable food markets. The three responses about safety noted that East Lansing feels less safe than campus.



Figure 37: Sticky-Note Health & Safety data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

Health and safety data from the Discussion workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 38). Students in the Discussion Workshop felt positive about their safety overall in the City of East Lansing. One main topic of concern for students was their access to fresh and healthy foods as this was the most mentioned topic with 8 comments.



Figure 38: Discussion Health & Safety data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



Environment & Green-space data from the Sticky-Note Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 39). Nature and green-space was mentioned 20 times as being a positive aspect of East Lansing. Students enjoy the scenery and nature around the city. Students would like to see more parks and green-space mentioning nature and green-space 13 times as an area of improvement.



Figure 39: Sticky-Note Environment & Greenspace data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

Environment & Green-space data from the Discussion Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 40). Students enjoy the parks, open green-space, and trails with 9 mentions. The 3 responses related to improvement recommend more green-space as well as a mention of improving gardens. Students also enjoy the built environment in downtown East Lansing. The layout and design of the city is highly regarded as well with 7 mentions. The built environment also had 4 mentions of improvement with half of these responses relating to the sidewalk conditions downtown.

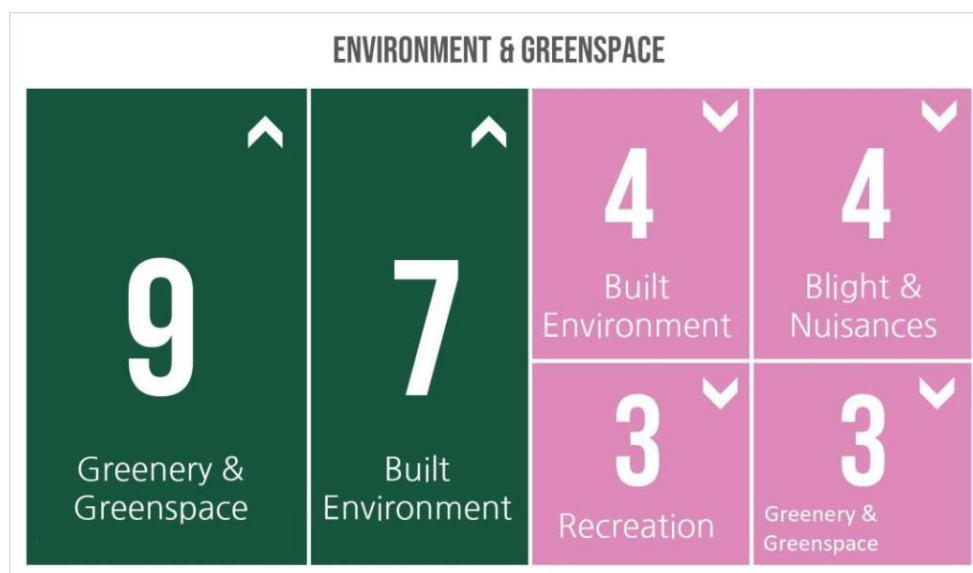


Figure 40: Sticky-Note Environment & Greenspace data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



Culture & Commerce data from the Sticky-Note Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 41). Student feel really good about the community aspect of East Lansing. There were 14 positive community responses that give light to how great the people are in the city. There were also 5 responses that enjoyed the Spartan and student culture in East Lansing. Along with these positive responses there were 3 that described East Lansing as lonely with not much to do off campus when class is not in session. There were 2 responses that felt it would help the city if there were more community activities.

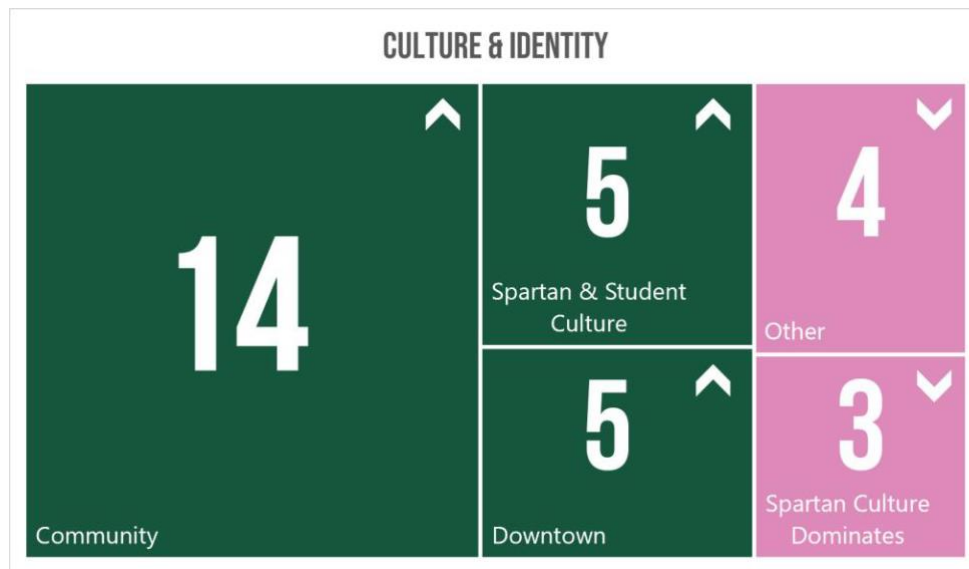


Figure 41: Sticky-Note Culture & Identity data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)

Culture & Commerce data from the Discussion Workshops was compiled and organized by topic and subtopic into a tree map (Figure 42). Diversity was the most important topic for students in this section as it was mentioned 7 times overall. Students think East Lansing is diverse but could actively welcome it more. Students also enjoy the identity of the city and the campus culture it holds but commented that there could be room for the city to grow its branding independent of MSU.

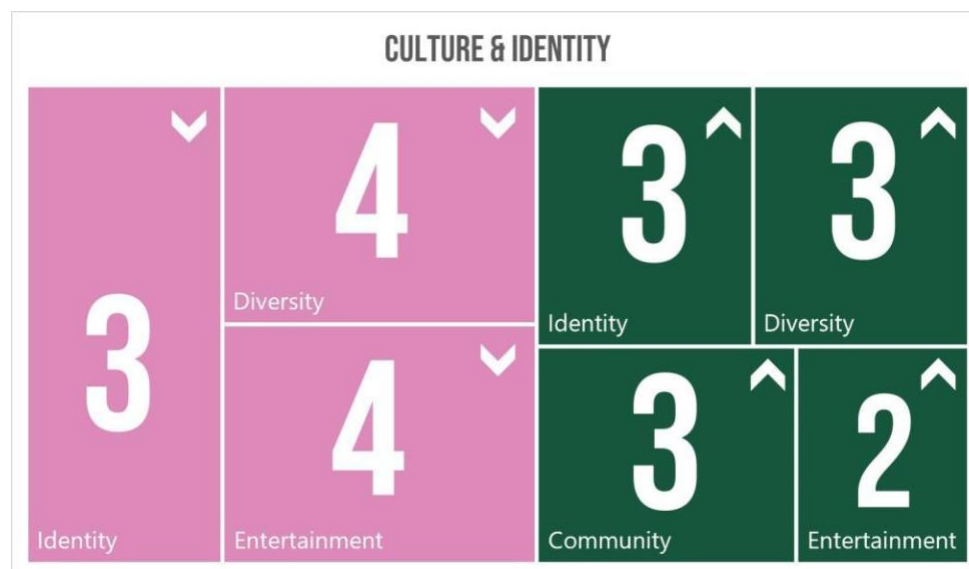


Figure 42: Discussion Culture & Identity data (MSU Practicum Team, 2024)



## 6

## Establish a Local Commission on Food.

Based on the results from student engagement, the local food system was an area of interest for many students. Students expressed a desire to have more access to fresh, healthy, and affordable foods. According to the 2020 National College Health Assessment, 2 out of 5 MSU students reported experiencing food insecurity (NCHA, 2020). Food insecurity is associated with several negative outcomes for students including lower physical and mental health (Darling, 2017) (Bruening, 2016). Research shows that local governments can have a meaningful role in food outcomes in a community through programs and policy (Lang et al, 2019). Understanding a local food system and leveraging the data and knowledge collected about it can provide a foundation for a resilient, healthy, and equitable food system.

The Practicum Team's analysis of the downtown area determined that the food landscape is primarily dominated by fast food and restaurant chains. This finding was consistent with a Yale study that analyzed the food outlets in Lansing and East Lansing (Taylor et al., 2023). There are limited full-line grocery stores in proximity to campus and students had concerns relating to the prices found in downtown stores.

### Establish a local commission on food systems & food sustainability.

The Practicum Team recognizes that issues surrounding food access are multifaceted and will require a network of dedicated support and focus to achieve transformative change. Therefore, we recommend that the city establish a local commission on food. This food commission can help foster food donation partnerships, food education, as well as support local growers through channels like the East Lansing farmer's market. Currently, the nearest body similar to the one proposed is the Capital Area Food Council which oversees the food network in the Lansing tri-county area. A localization in East Lansing could work to further address student and permanent resident needs that may be unique to the city.

### Actions

#### Near (0-6 months)

- Establish a local commission on food systems & food sustainability.
- Plan for the steps of evaluating the food waste in the community and opportunities for donation.
- Analyze food needs in the community and identify at risk and food insecure groups through community engagement.
- Establish a food waste baseline and then determine a reduction goal and timeline to complete by. Our team recommends consulting the National Resources Defense Council toolkit for this step.

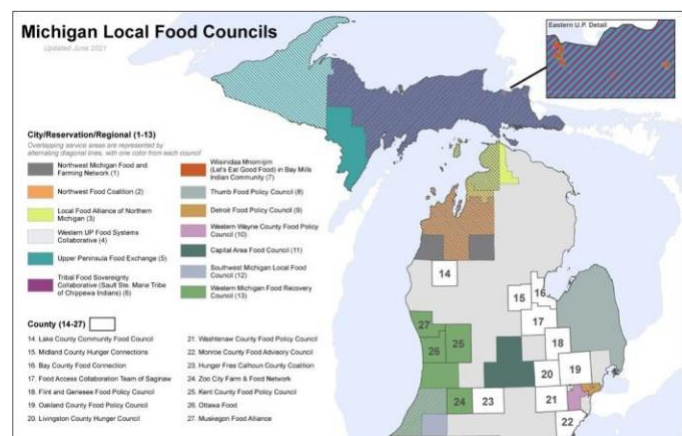


Figure 43: Michigan Local Food Council Map (MSU Extension, 2021)



## Mid (6-12 months)

- Create and distribute educational material on reducing food waste that targets the appropriate audience. Residential food waste for citizens and commercial food waste for business owners.
- Establish partnerships with local non-profits and food banks.
- Create a directory that enables local businesses and other organizations to easily connect with food donation centers.

## Ongoing

- Continue to foster partnerships and identify opportunities for more efficient food systems. Work with the MSU food bank, Greater Lansing Food Bank, and other regional organizations to distribute food to those in need.

## Expected Benefits

- Increased motivation and public accountability for actions relating to food systems.
- Further food equity and reduce food insecurity in the community.
- Better understanding of the local food system and its strengths and weaknesses.
- Opportunity to identify and build partnerships with existing organizations such as the Capital Area Food Council, MSU, and MSU Extension, and local food banks.

## Funding Opportunities

- **The Healthy Food Financing Initiative.** This initiative is a USDA grant program that local governments can apply for and use the funds for a variety of actions including to: Support new or existing partnerships, such as state or local food funds or financing programs. Explore, establish, or grow a healthy food financing fund for underserved communities. Increase internal and external capacity building. Identify and improve access to seed capital.

## Resources

### **Estimating Quantities and Types of Food Waste at the City Level**

- **The Healthy Food Financing Initiative**  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA-RD-FS-Healthy-Foods-Financing-initiative.pdf>
- **Food Connections: Capital Area Community Food Profile**  
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/foodsystems/uploads/files/cacfoodprofile.pdf>
- **Guide to Developing a Community Food Profile**  
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/foodsystems/uploads/files/CFPdevtguide-1.pdf>
- **Michigan Good Food Charter 2022**  
[https://www.canr.msu.edu/contentAsset/raw-datafb6f536d3fb8b90da562260791bf2fed/fileAsset?language\\_id=1](https://www.canr.msu.edu/contentAsset/raw-datafb6f536d3fb8b90da562260791bf2fed/fileAsset?language_id=1)
- **Tackling Food Waste in Cities: A Policy and Program Toolkit**  
<https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/food-waste-cities-policy-toolkit-report.pdf>



## RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY



### HOUSING

#### **Recommendation #1:**

Incorporate flexible zoning into the ordinance that supports diverse affordable housing options.

#### **Recommendation #2**

Support cooperative code enforcement measures and home improvement programs.



### TRANSPORTATION

#### **Recommendation #3**

Address gaps in off-campus transportation options.

#### **Recommendation #4**

Increase pedestrian crosswalk & bike lane visibility to increase safety and reduce motor vehicle accidents.



### ECONOMY & RECREATION

#### **Recommendation #5**

Encourage more under-21 recreation & non-food retail shopping.



### COMMUNITY WELLNESS

#### **Recommendation #7**

Establish a local commission on food.







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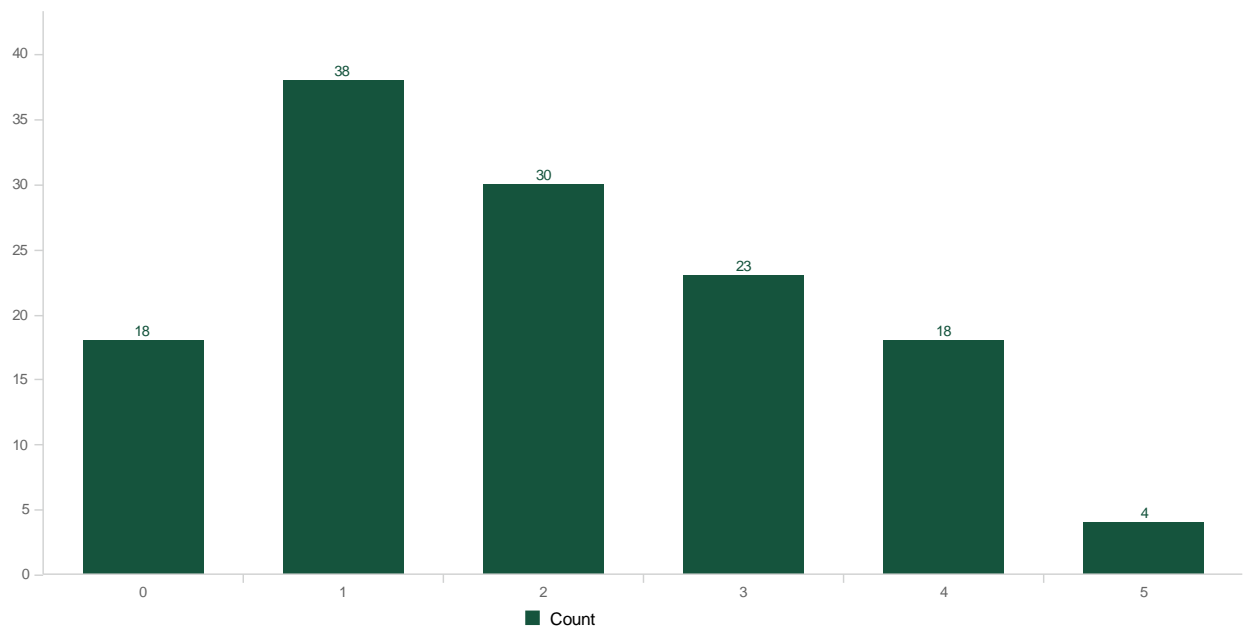
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# Appendix

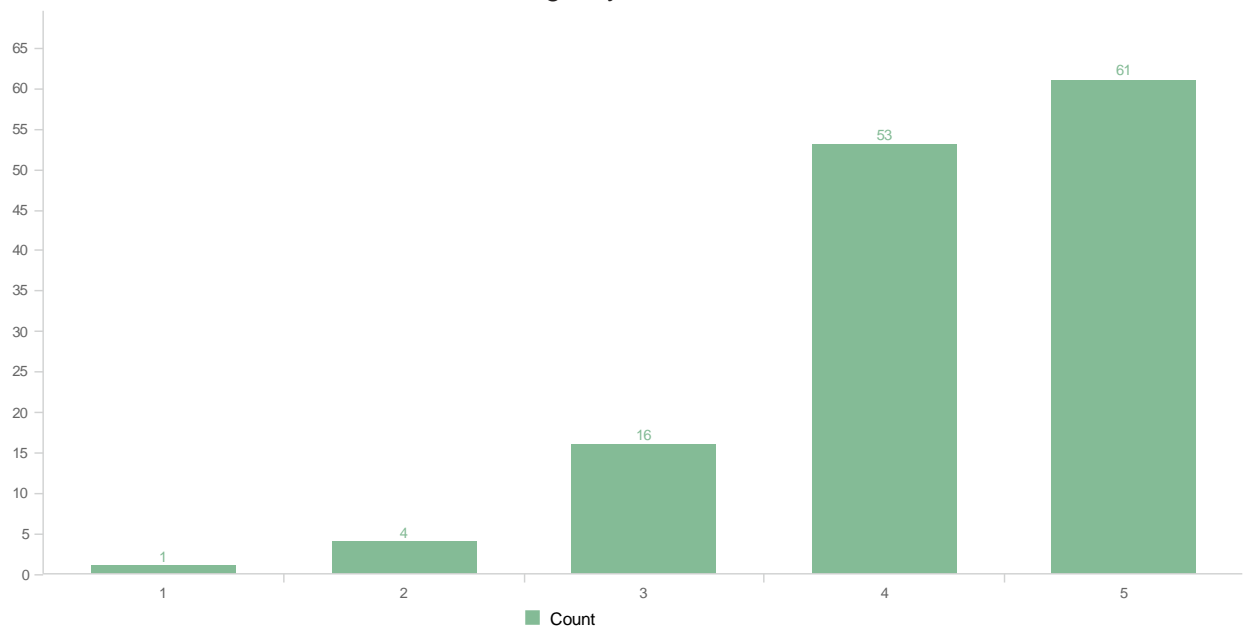
## Student Engagement Survey Data

There is an adequate amount of affordable housing in the City of East Lansing.



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.36	1.84	131

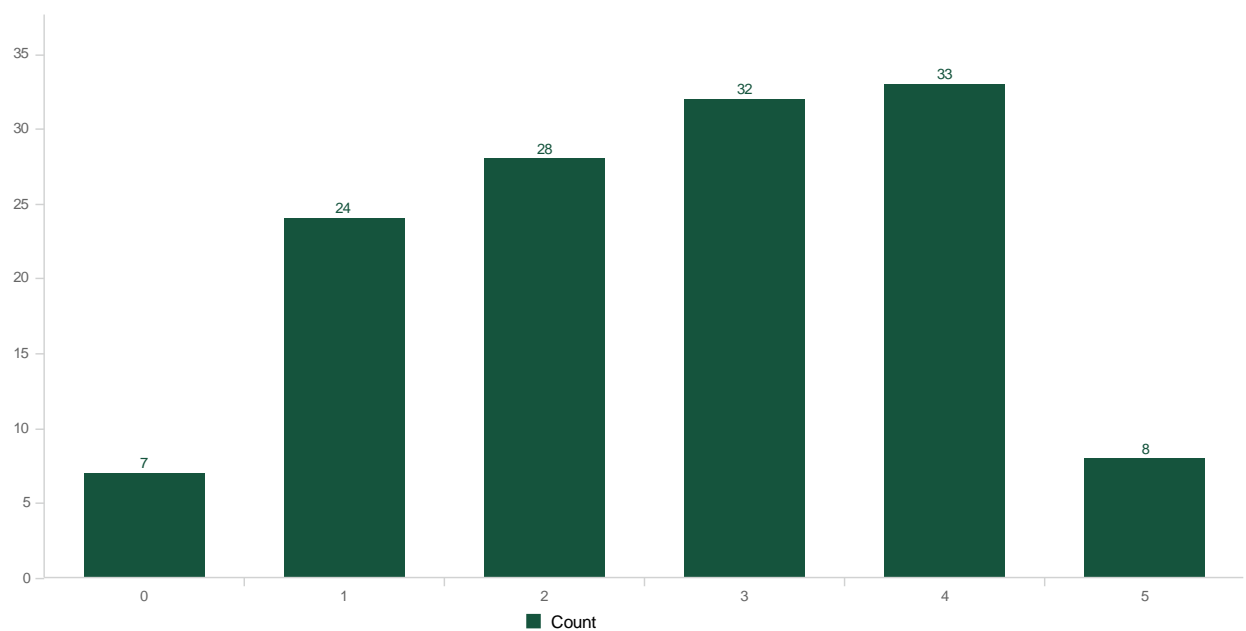
How important is the amount of affordable housing to you?



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	0.83	0.69	135

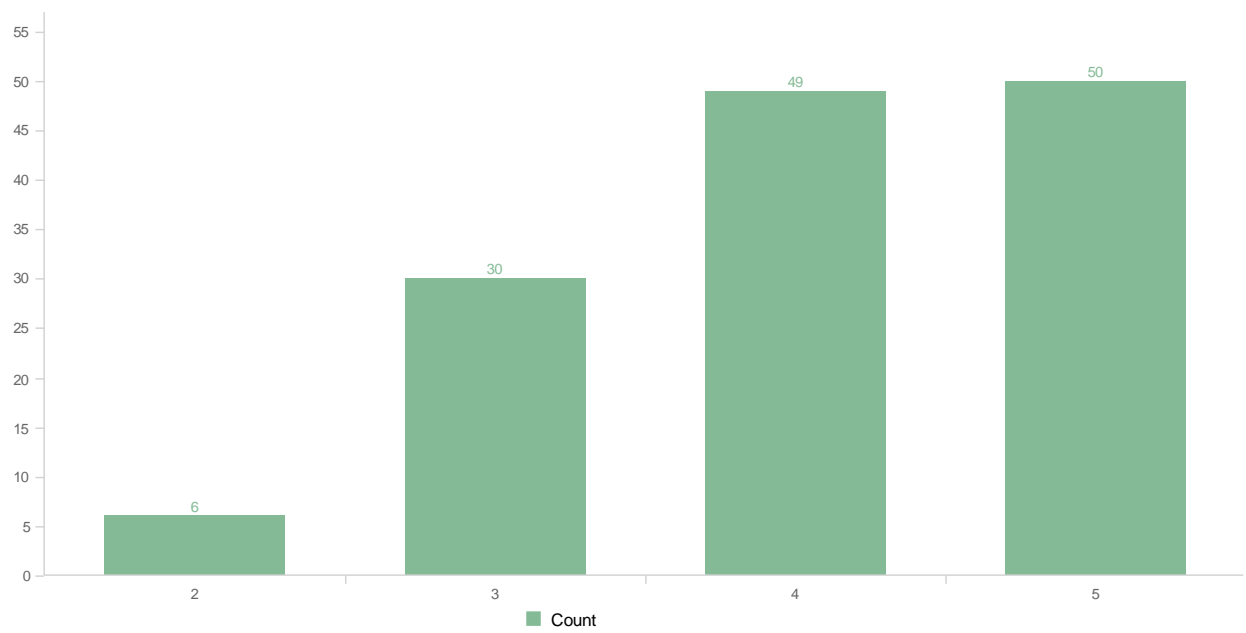


The available housing in East Lansing is of acceptable quality.



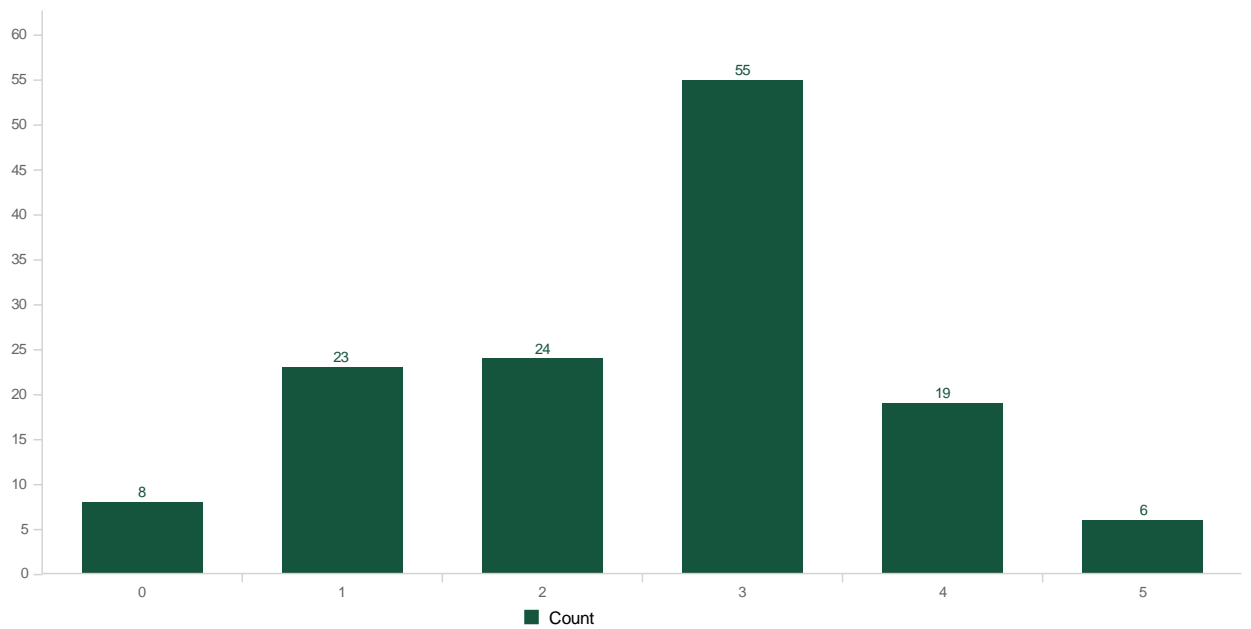
#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.33	1.78	132

How important is the quality of housing to you?



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	0.88	0.77	135

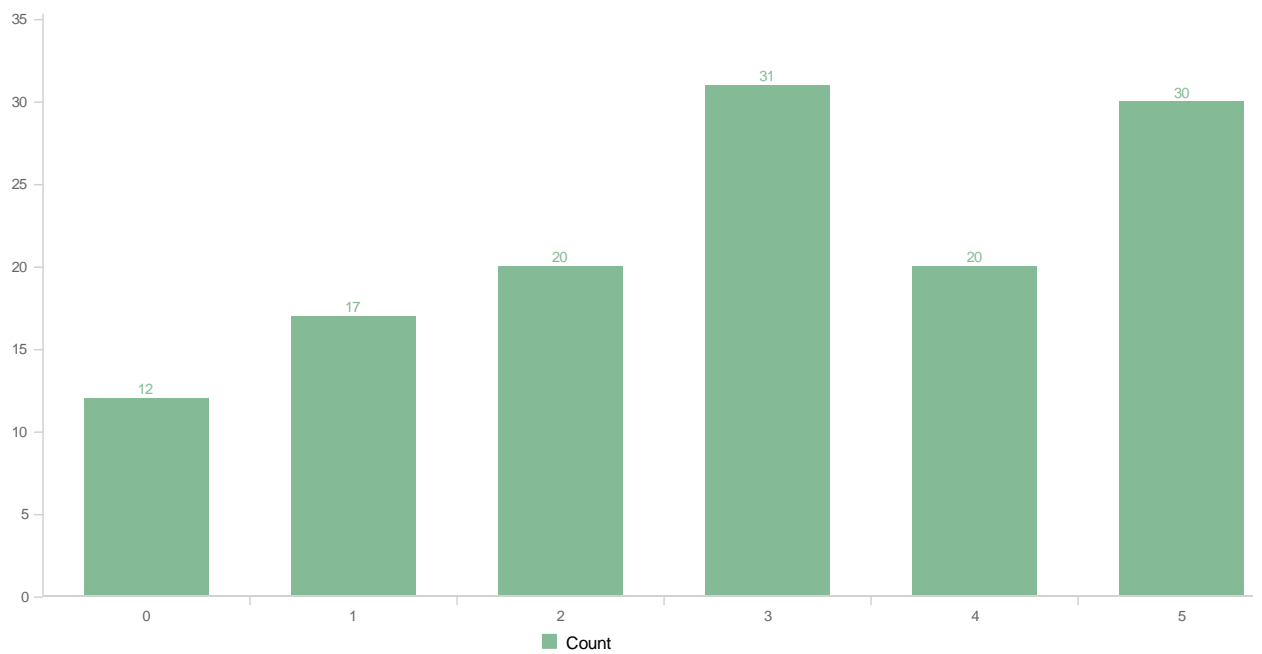




▲ #                      ▲ Field                      ▲ Std Deviation                      ▲ Variance                      ▲ Count

1                      Scale                      1.22                      1.49                      135

How important is the post-graduate East Lansing job market to you?

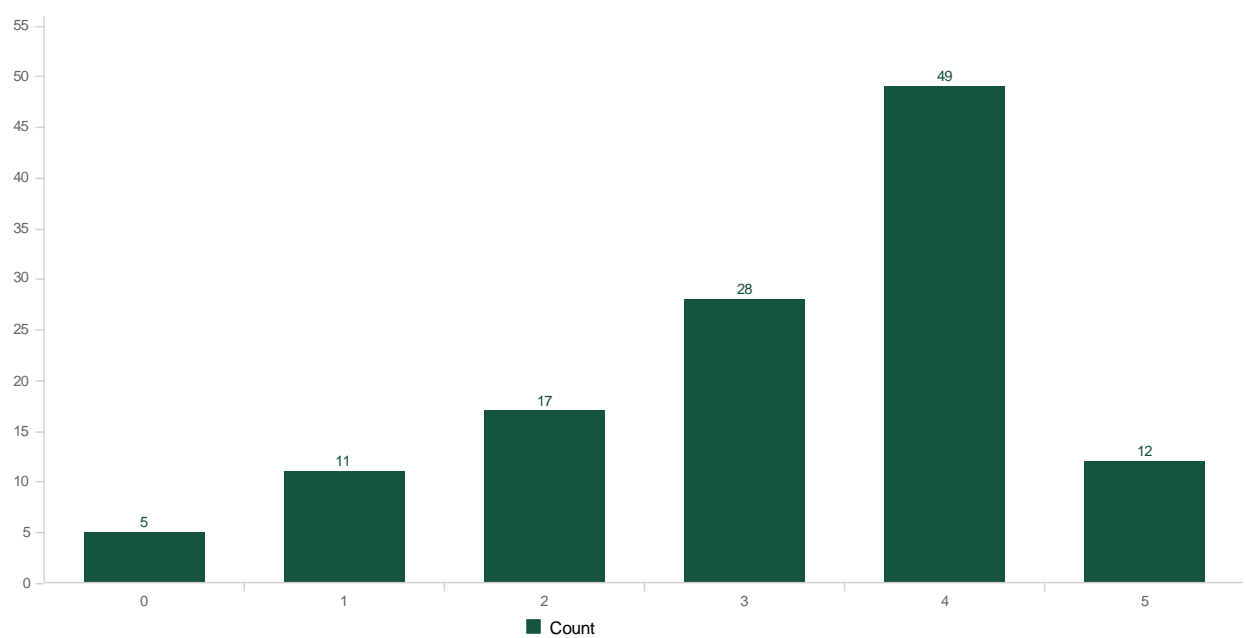


#                      Field                      Std Deviation                      Variance                      Count

1                      Scale                      1.61                      2.58                      130

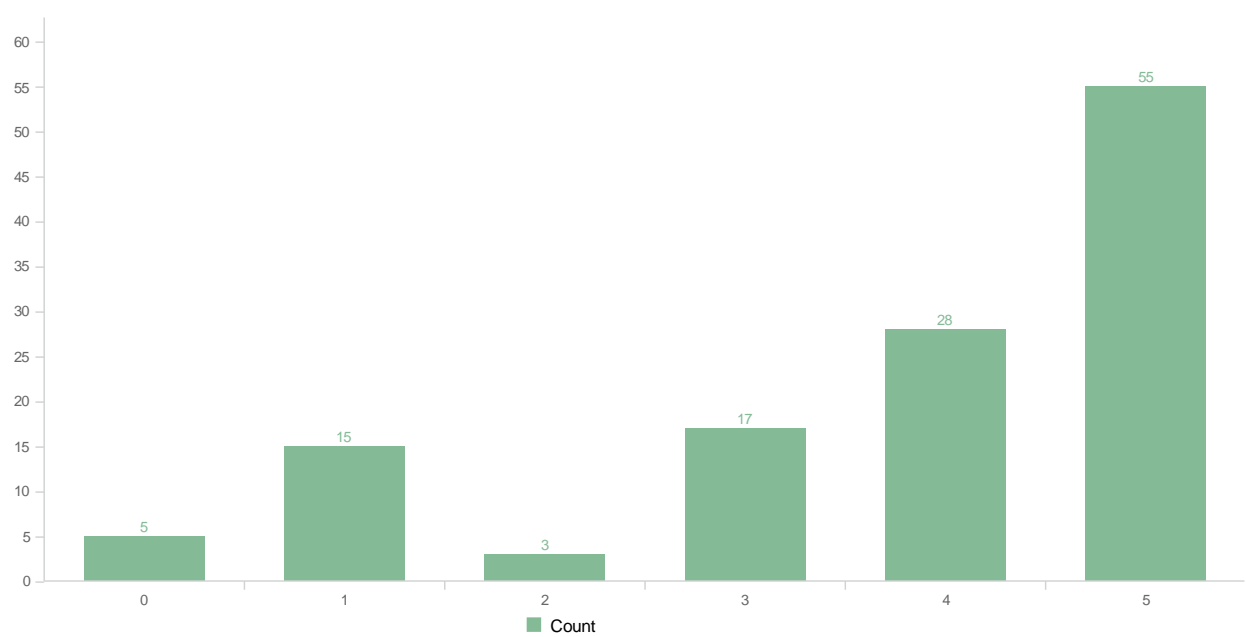


The public transportation in the City of East Lansing is adequate.



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.28	1.64	122

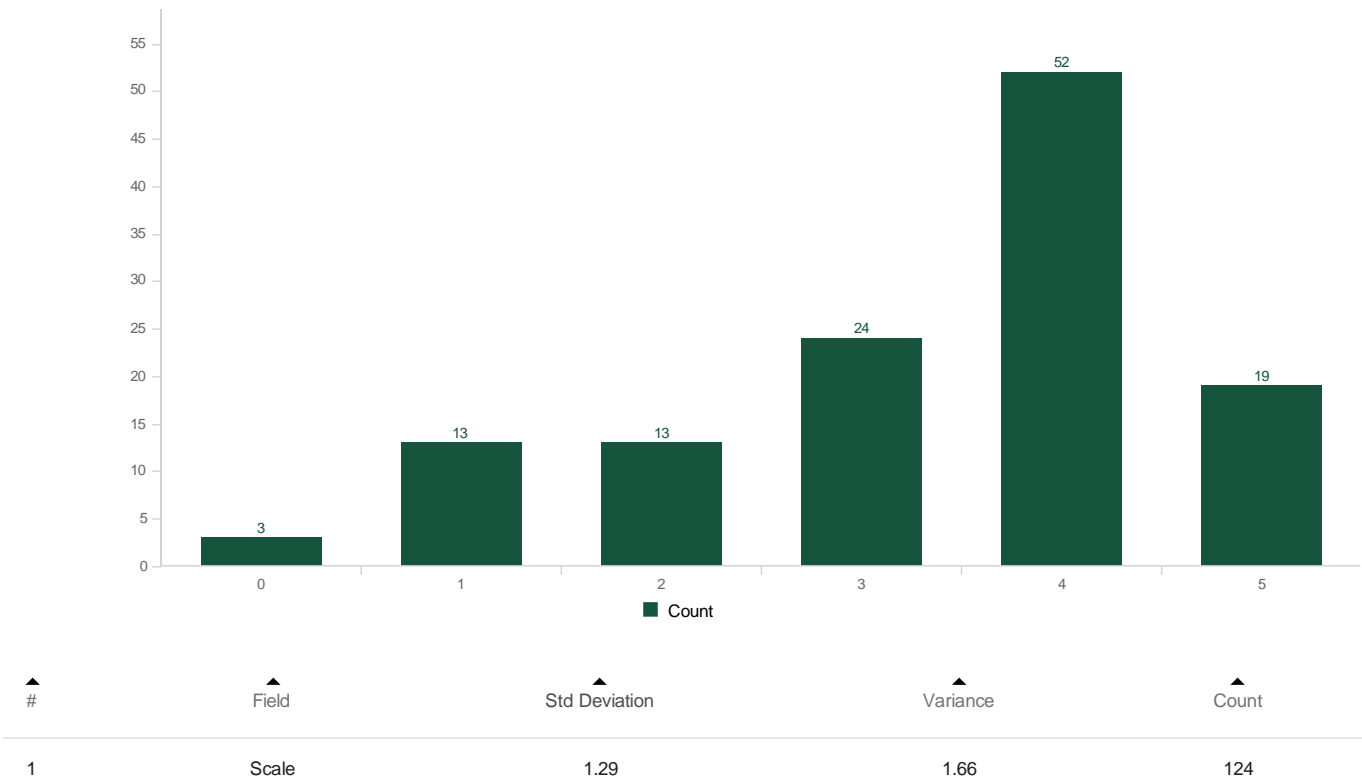
How important is public transportation to you?



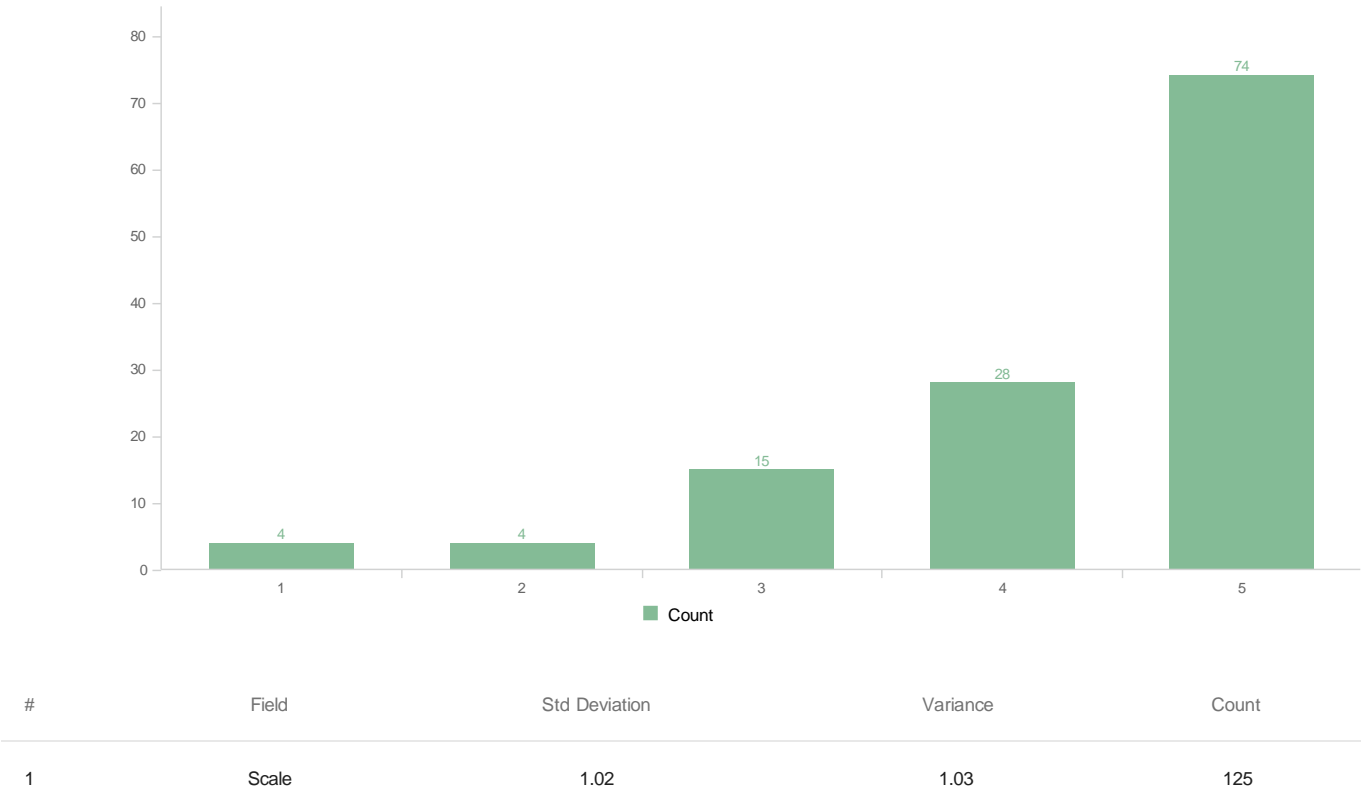
#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.54	2.36	123



The City of East Lansing is a safe place to travel by bike.

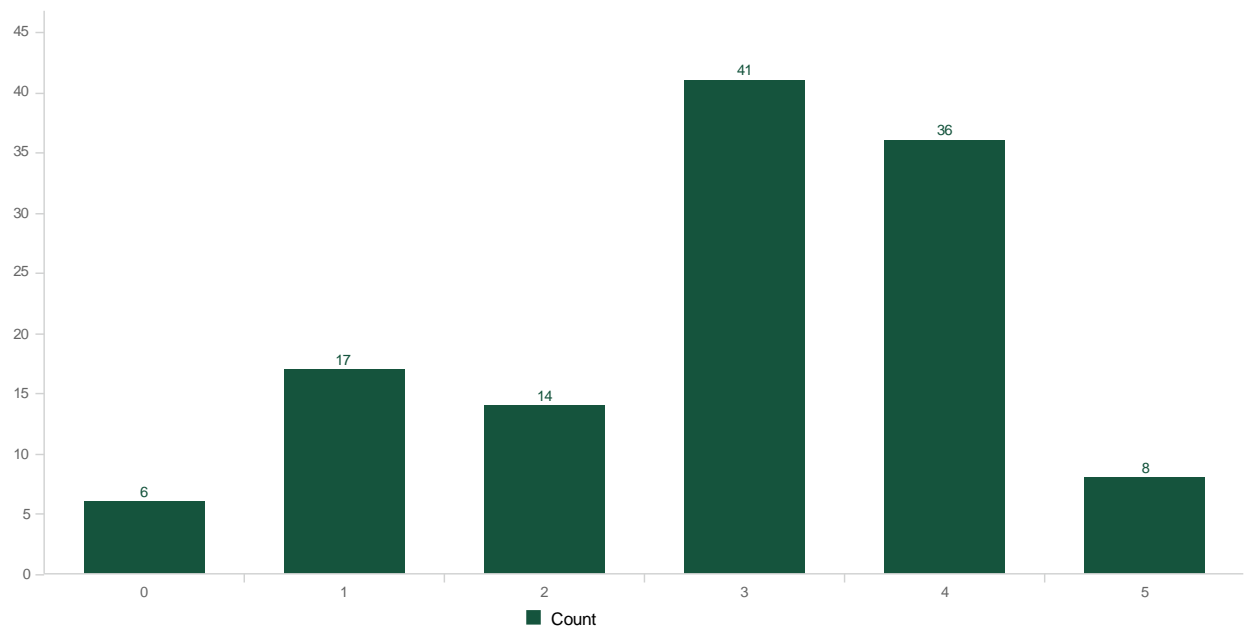


How important is it to you for East Lansing to be pedestrian friendly?



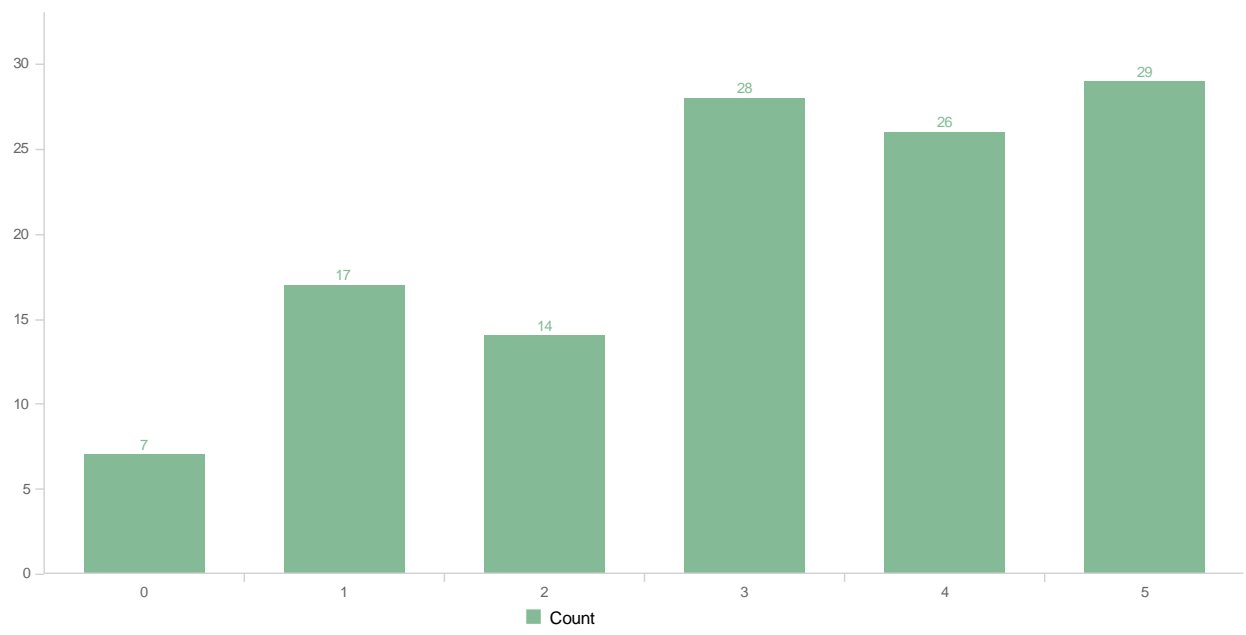


The City of East Lansing is Pedestrian friendly.



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.29	1.66	122

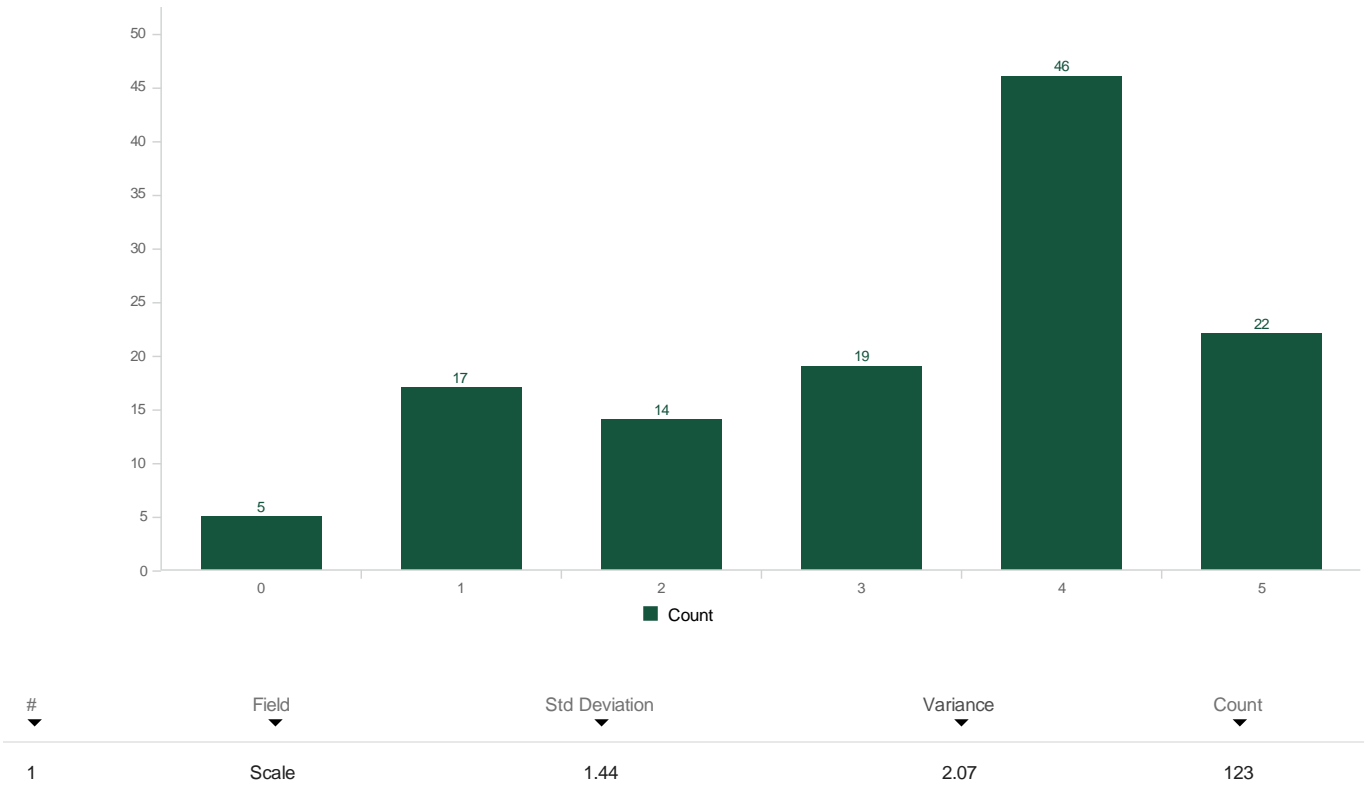
How important is safe bike travel to you?



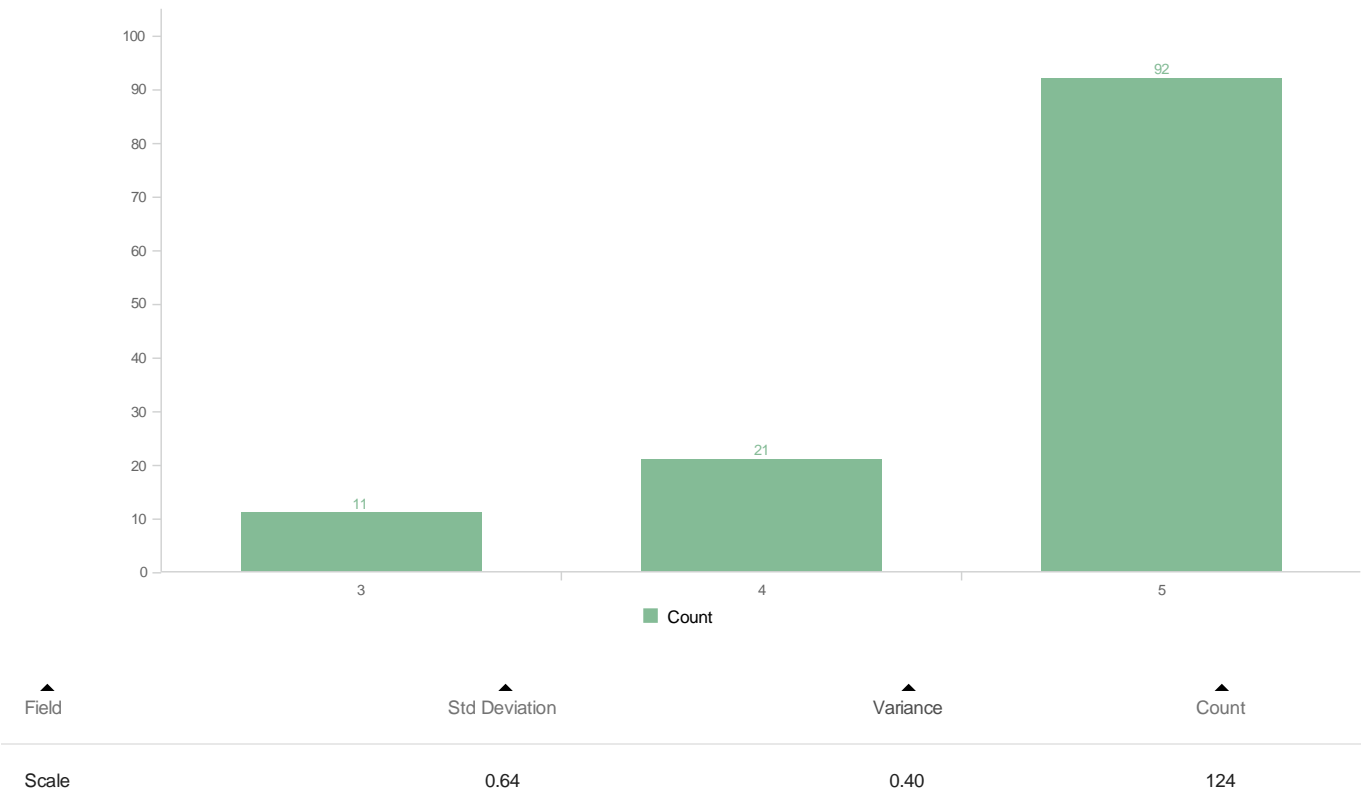
#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.54	2.36	121



The City of East Lansing offers adequate opportunities for the recycling and reuse of

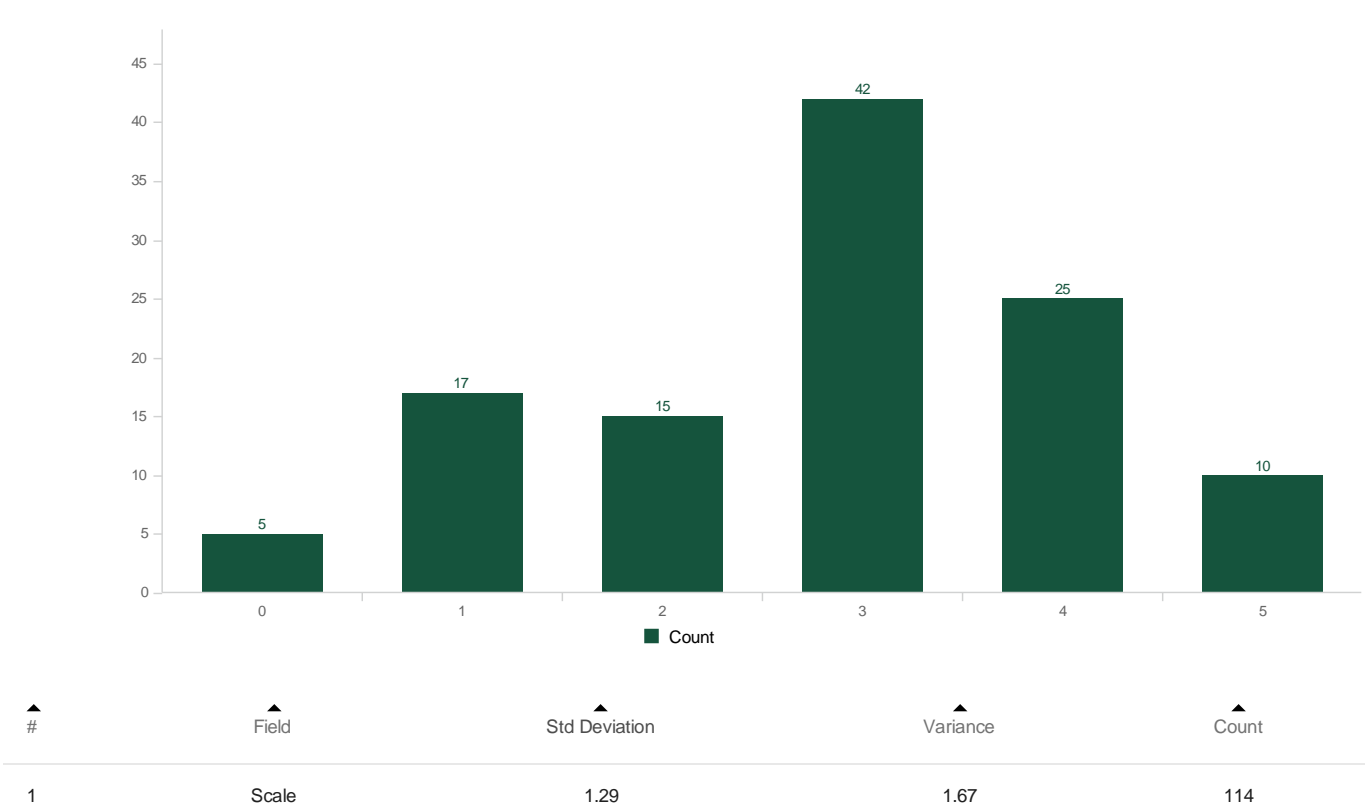


How important is it to you to feel safe walking by yourself in East Lansing?

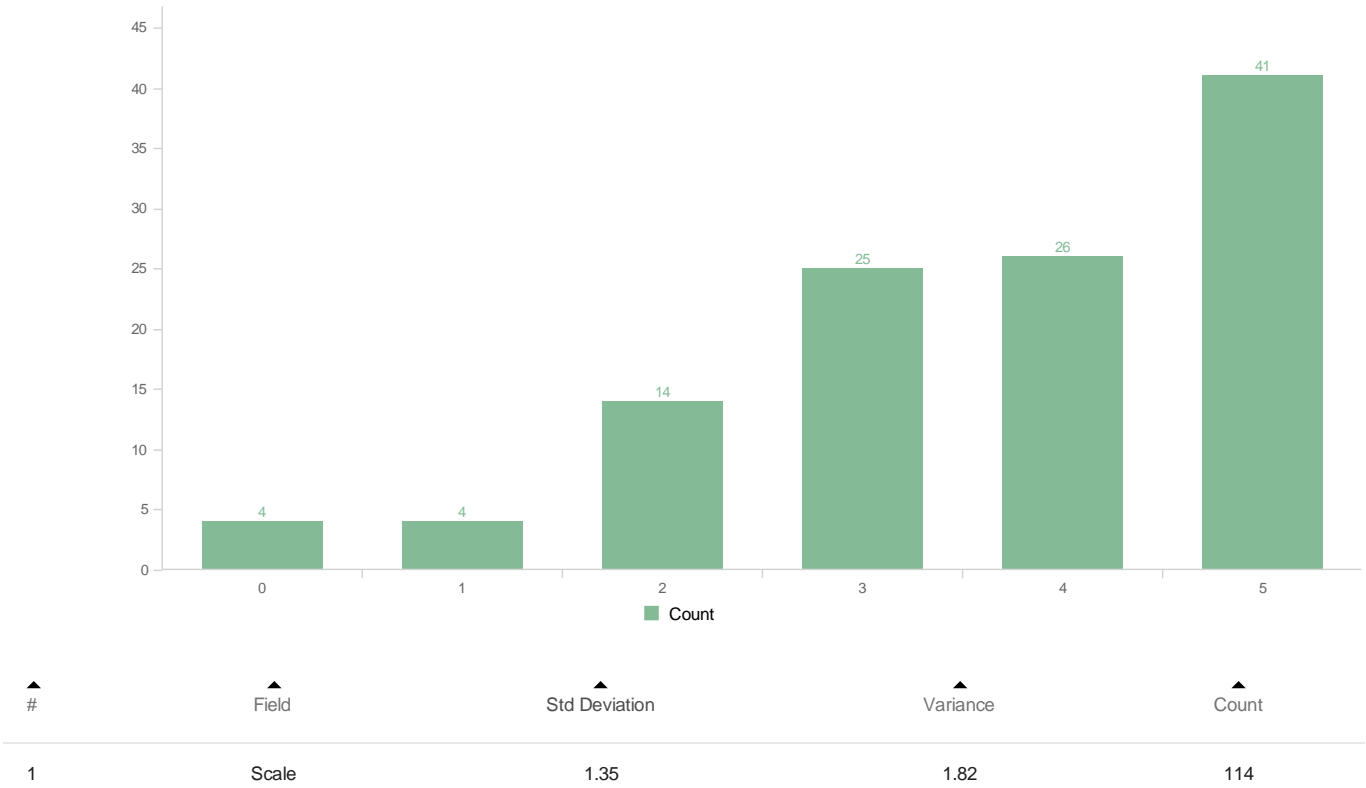




I feel safe walking by myself in the City of East Lansing.

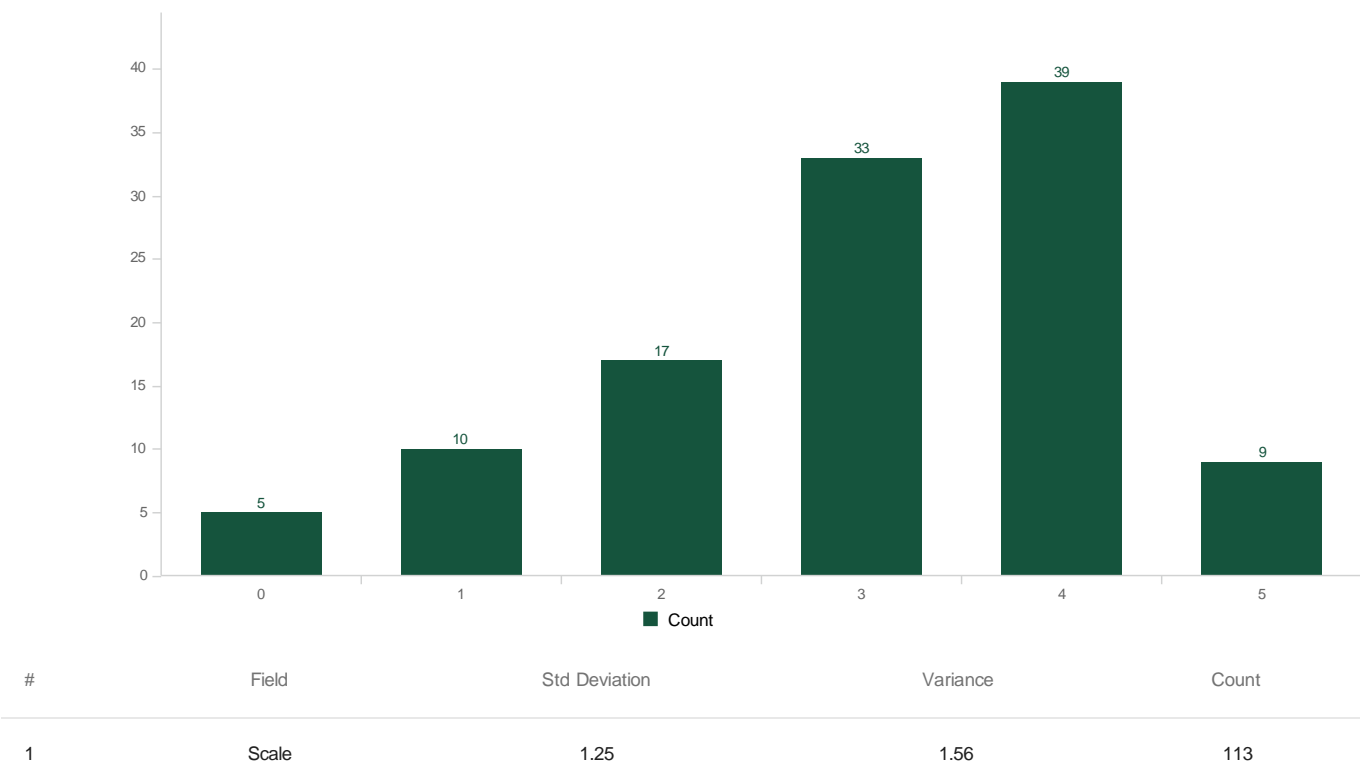


How important is recycling to you?

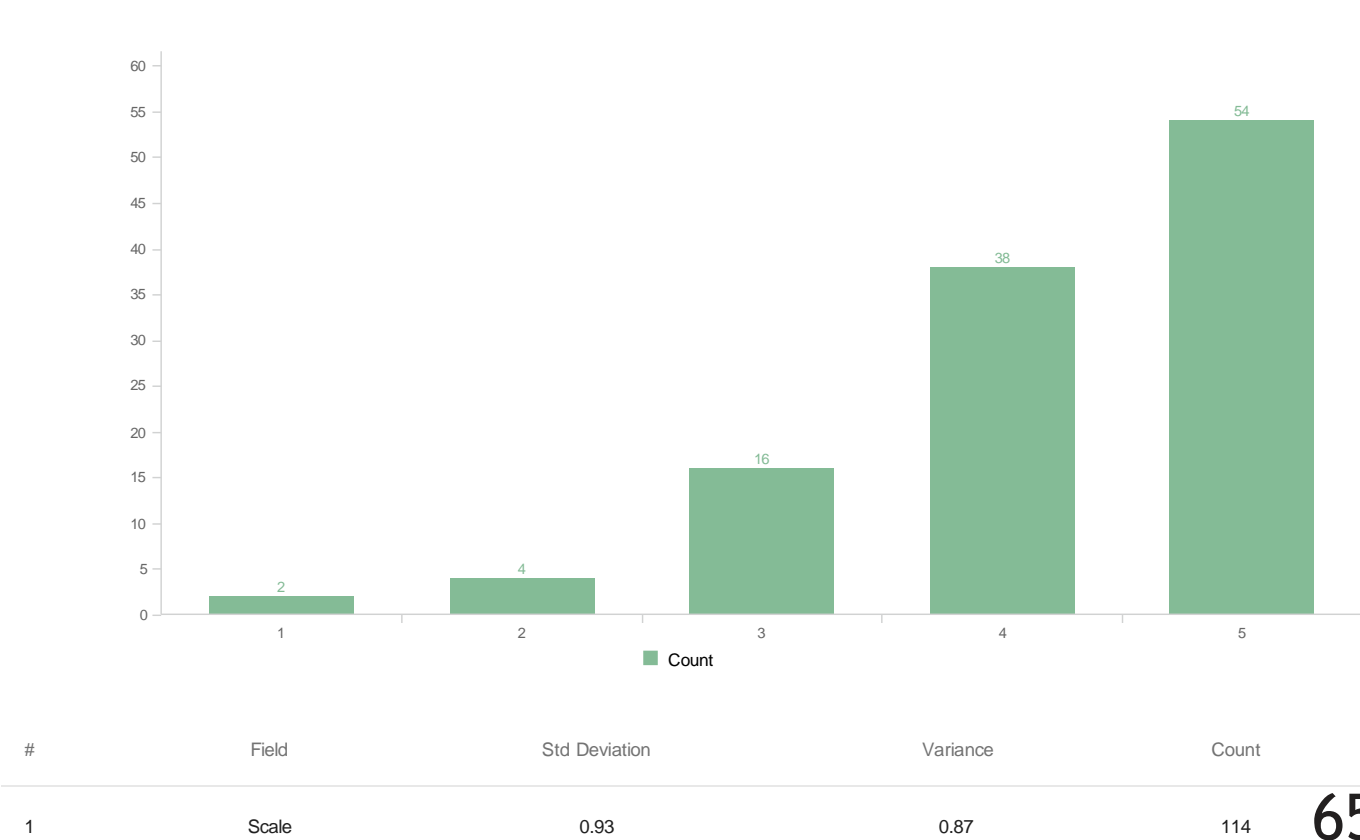




The City of East Lansing offers adequate opportunities for the recycling and reuse of

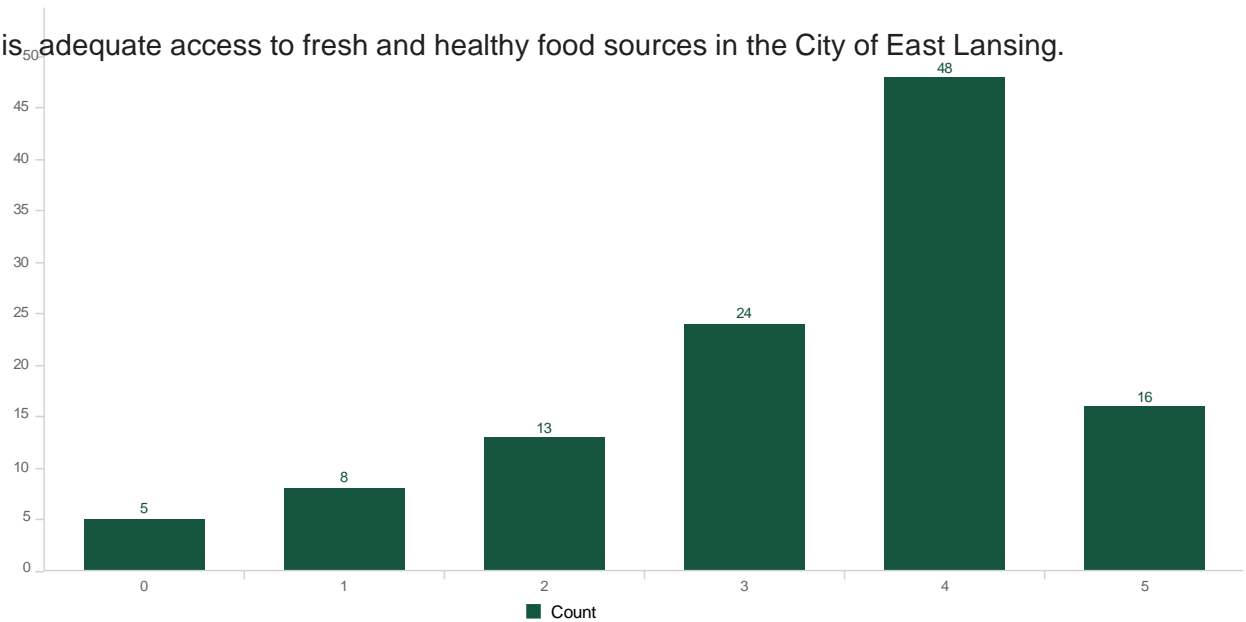


How important is access to fresh and healthy foods to you?



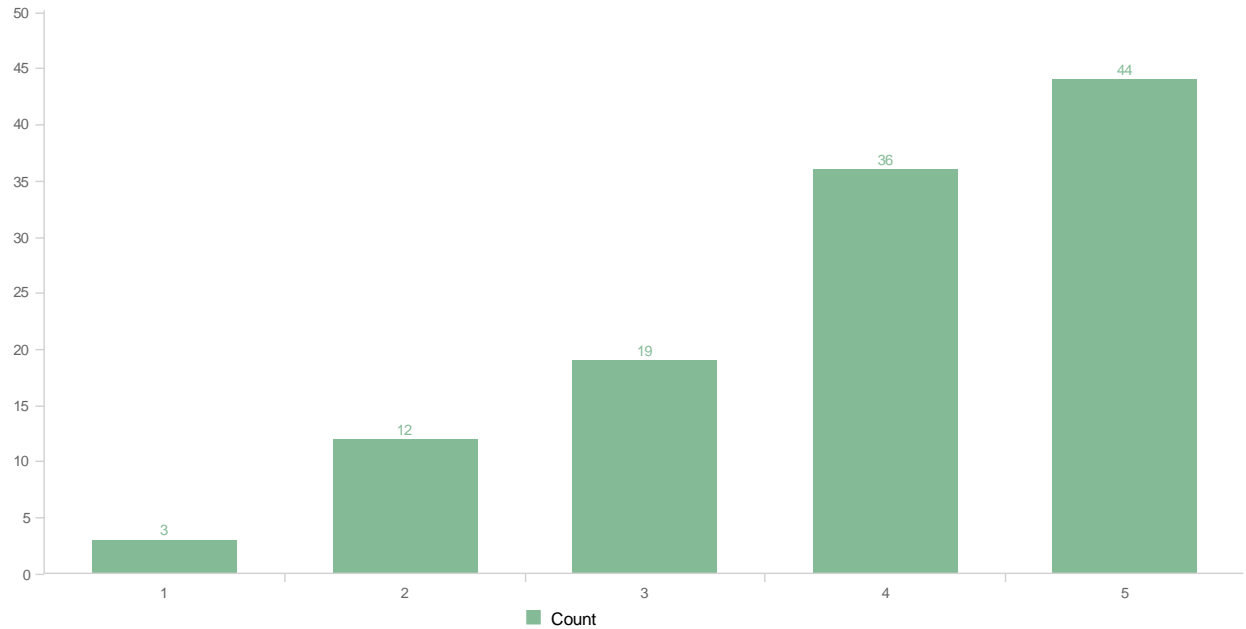


There is adequate access to fresh and healthy food sources in the City of East Lansing.



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.29	1.67	114

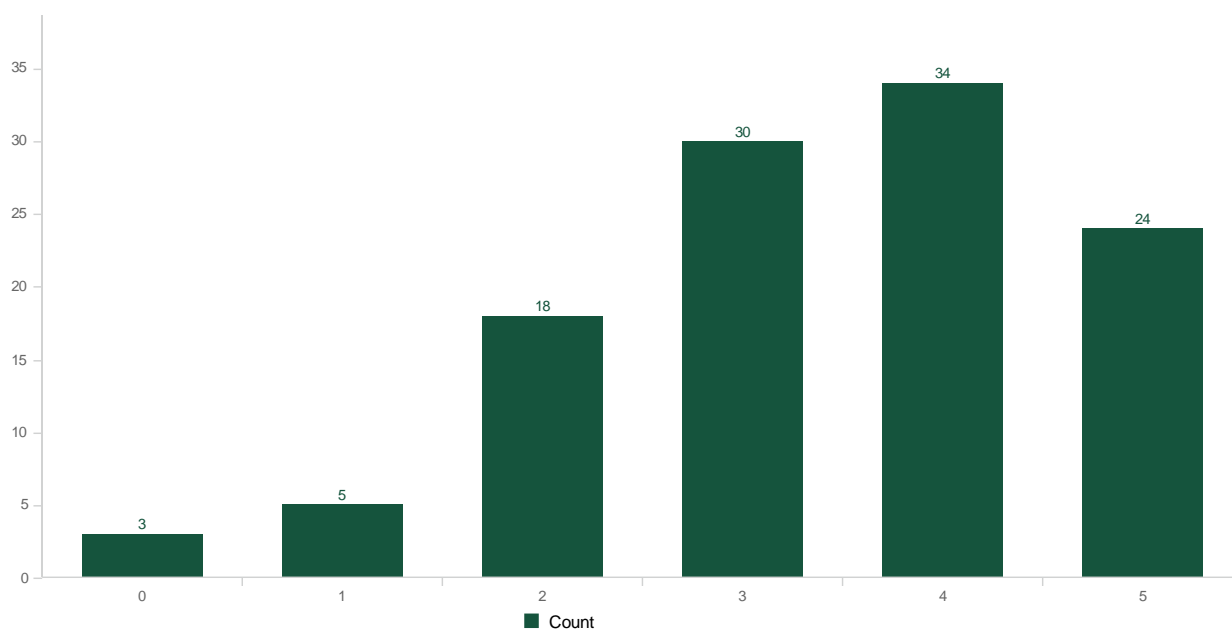
How important is having access to greenspace and recreational opportunities to you?



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.10	1.21	114

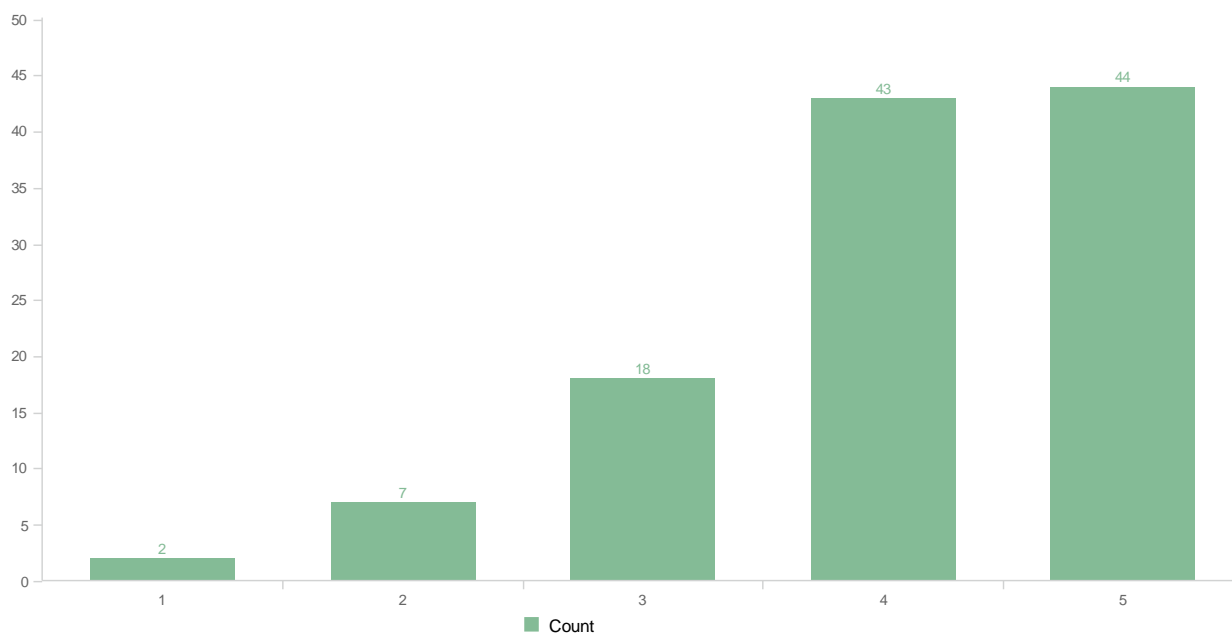


There are adequate health resources (e.g. urgent care, pharmacies, etc.) available in the City of East Lansing.



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	1.25	1.55	114

How important is access to public health resources (e.g. urgent care, pharmacies, etc.) to you?



#	Field	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Scale	0.97	0.94	114



Sticky-Note Workshop Data

Activity Diversity (7)

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More  
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Business & Commerce

Expensive (1)

Stores are  
more  
expensive  
here

Res1aurants/Food(22)

Cood  
food  
options

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downtown

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gatfood  
off-dn places to

Food Type (4)

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more  
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places

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More Food (2)

more food  
locations

more

More Retail (3)

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Needs more  
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Activities (2)

I love  
the cat  
cafe

Local Business (4)

East Lansing doesn't  
have many family  
owned restaurants,  
its really only  
chain-especially fast  
food chains

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local 11111111 bull-

Shops(4)

walkable  
downtown  
with many  
great  
restaurants  
andshops

good  
local  
shops

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different and  
endless options of  
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I like the  
shops  
downtown



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# Health & Safety

More Markets (2)

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affordable  
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Safety (3)

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anywhere off  
campus

Theoff.campus area  
.....cillfwNnt•  
.....\_dltlennt  
fromthe...on

Health (1)

I don't like  
the  
hospitals  
(sparrow)

Water Quality (1)

The water qualityIs  
amazing.I llk•how  
thewater tastes and  
how staffensure it is  
safe to drink.Best  
tap water In mid  
Michigan, thanks to  
thaELMWSA



## Community Wellness

Safety (3)

Have an  
**affordable**  
market! More  
**affordable**  
food!

**more**  
international  
**markets**

.....\_Ny\_.....  
-d-.....  
-otnht,  
.....Ingo/.....to  
crowded and more  
IMly

I don't like  
that I **feel**  
unsafe  
**anywhere** off  
campus

The off-campus area  
.....cllflwNnt•  
.....dtlennt  
**from the,,,on**

I don't like  
**the**  
hospitals  
(sparrow)

---

The water quality is  
amazing. I like how  
the water tastes and  
how staff ensure it is  
safe to drink. Best  
tap water in mid  
Michigan, thanks to  
the ELMWSA



## Culture & Identity

## Spartan & Student Culture (5)

I love the  
people of East  
Lansing. I



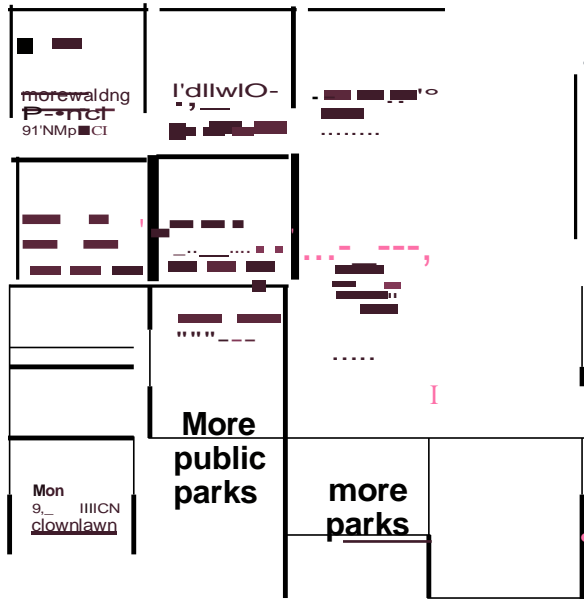
Community	I lovethe
(restaurants, people, etc.)	community at MSU

Idon'tU...  
conlllllling  
eommunicadon and  
lackof comm... lty



# Environment

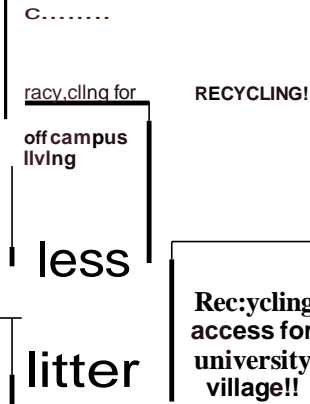
## Nature/Greenspace(13)



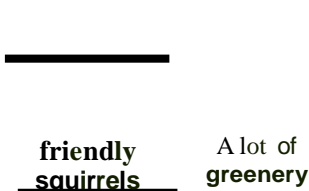
## Built Environment (8)



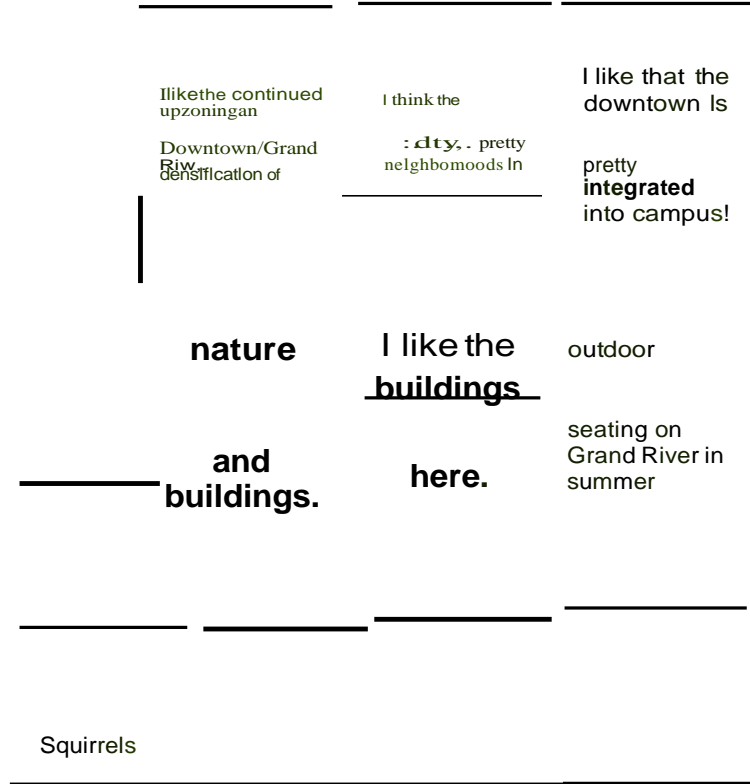
## Recycling improvement (4)



## Nature/Greenspace (20)



## Built Environment (9)



## I like how in

sunvner Albertt's block N off, it should be like that on-

## Grand River Ave is

amt llttkt downtown. I h-tt l more developed IO that moN people can come and enjoy, tt wll help econom

## III OI

Kept most of its historical looks for

## buildings

## the trees

I like the Ent Lansingia environmentally friendly, pN>Yiche the RH Cedars and

vrwnampl eof what I llike about the city.



# Housing

## Affordable (14)

Put an uppw limit r... housl....,partm-.	Housing should be more affordable	More affordable housing	
lower rent or no rent monopoly doseto campus.	Lower rent for students	More affordable housing	I would like to see more affordable housing.
I would change housing affordability	More affordable housing. Lowerthe rent	The rent is too high	Cheaper apartments for students
more affordable housing	Rent at off-campus apartments Is too hghl LOWEAITI	It is not an affordable place to live.	

## Amount of housing (3)

More housing	Allow more apartments near campus area	More housing
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## Quality (3)

Affordable ho1.111ng and proper inspection& of housing. Th- la a housing, _ with IIUCheiq»nlive option&"" the buildings aren't maintaining code.	Housing off campus is SS downtown. EL when ■P'I'9/hOUH■ a.,n, wry nice. If EL more "clti," l'hoe. I think it'd be better	Housing is bad, a lot of houses have flooding, pests, etc.
--	--	--

## Amount of housing (1)


I like the amount of apartments around campus.

## Property Management (3)


Landlords need to have repercussions.	less predatory housing market	boar housing. I lenawtoomany paaplewhoara being taking advantage of by th91r houllinv company
---------------------------------------	-------------------------------	---





Bus Quality & Reliability(10)

 Transportation Ph...	transportation	Transportation neachito b9 f..	<b>Better public transit</b>
<b>Better transit</b>	<b>more reliable busses</b>	<b>more reliable busses</b>	buHScanbe inconliBilenl

Accessible Bus Stops (4)

 accessible bus stop	I do nth nk IsaKaabl nough.	I wilht.... .....
---	-----------------------------------	----------------------

More Bus Routes (9)

 off-campus tfln11P0rwltion	IWMdw-lha -SIO f	something I would change is adding more public transportation and more bus routes	 .....
<b>More bus routes</b>	<b>need more bus routes</b>	more bus routes	

Bus Price (4)



I would keto dd.... too f f compudla m.id-nlli	lb1111p-MSU lltudents couldtab III thebuse far FREE	MONSHre TIME	QTF
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## Transportation & Mobility

Traffic (2)

title management
<b>traffic</b>

Pedestrian Safety (7)

 Mand1Mcilal,n	MalcllllOrand Aiftr Safer fQr pedHl:rtar.	Etill,111e1M-1-o1 lllVllrlahc1f. 1111..... .....
 people drive Kamabac 9carecl		Needm1111e ped-strian1
		moni Nnlency for &kataboanlll

lanes (5)

Bike

## Bike lanes

 friendly	M...111, ...public InnlpOrt.End Infrastructw. End UrInNn 1p,rawl	<b>Harrison could use more bike lanes</b>
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Road Condition (3)

Badraads, patsholaa, paorly plannacl	<b>Improve roads</b>	<b>Road conditions</b>
---	--------------------------	----------------------------

Bus System (6)

**Love  
CATA**

public  
transport

I like tho  
relatively  
efficient and  
acce:sibl bus  
■■■■

**bus  
system**

bus  
options  
are nice

**Decent  
public  
transport**

Walkability (11)

**Walking &  
biking  
friendly**

TOWNtht  
d-h-lcilll  
ThecomlQpand  
nllac,nubll <. In  
/uffp \$M

I like how  
walkable the  
city is for a  
small town

**good  
walkable  
space**

**walking &  
biking  
friendly**

I like that the  
downtown EL  
is walkable

relatively  
walkabifi

walkable it is  
and how there  
is &0methin9  
t1111do

**walkable**

I love the

walkable  
areas, bars are

**city**

walkebHty of  
EL

close  
together, feels

Bike Lanes (2)

I like  
**bike  
lanes**

lluhow  
bikeable  
it is



## More parking (12)

Parking	More parking around little shops in town	More street Parking
Parking is bad, not enough spots	More parking ramps	I would add more parking lots
More parking please or more free parking:)	More Parking Options	I wish there was more parking — o m H o b i e a round E L I d o n't have a car, but it's hard having visfloni find parking
I dislike how you can't park on the street overnight	I don't like the lack of parking	More parking

## Parking

### Less Parking (2)

LESSPARKING. Incentivize biking/walking/bullin
So much nature, too many parking lots

### Other (2)

I would change the parking

I would change the parking both on/off campus

## Parking affordability(14)

more subsidized parking	More free public parking	
parking prices, especially for employees	Price of Parking	Free parking (lot 62)
parking should be more affordable	Free parking for students	More free parking
More places provided for free parking	better roads, parking prices, and ticket prices	\$40 per ticket is outrageous when the 1.5 million in profit parking I do
FREE	More hours for free parking	more free parking
PARKING (OR REDUCE THE COST SHEESH)		



Miseellaneous

Finish construction	trash, peeing, vomiting In the alleyways
Wish there -re more public set'Vices - library, park, etc.	expensive
More voting centers, not JustBrody	M...lon- m , , , , ,
EL library Is far from campus	

I love studying at the East Lansing Library during finals	I love the weather here!
I like all of the opportunities	More free activities for kids
I like the resources available for everyone!	







## Health & Safety

### Medical Resources (6)

Pharmacies are not the best.	medical care doctors to Grand River/ Abbott	Urgent care/ clinic?
I feel like we need to have more resources on Mental Health	There is very little hospital, only urgent care	Doctors office in Hrbly that is not the health center

### Safety (6)

Fast fire/police response	The city is clean and peaceful and feels safe	Safe from violent crime	Safety	We like the safety
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### Public Amenities (3)

We do not have a homeless shelter or DY resources	more fitness centers open to students	Add more homeless shelters.
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### Public Amenities (1)

We have a recreation center

### Medical Resource (2)

Hospitals nearby-  
urgent care  
We have McLaren and Sparrow

### Fresh Food Access (8)

More options for...	No convenient options (Target too)	More options for...	There is a lack of cheap or even just reasonably stocked grocery stores within walking distance
Need more fresh food	Cheaper grocery stores	Fresh markets closer to campus	More... do not have a campus

### Safety (4)

emergency beacons like non-campus	More safety for locals and students	Need more streetlights around the city	Lack of street lights within sub-streets
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### Fresh Food Access (2)

Lots of access

to.../super markets are accessible by public transportation

W. likiet: M shopping center



Culture & Identity

Identity (3)

Reliant on MSU	More MSU pride downtown.	Identity branding of EL without MSU is weak
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Diversity (4)

Would like to see us include diversity within the community	Diversity	More diversity.	Little culture
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Entertainment (4)

Not good for entertainment	More events downtown.	Potential factors to draw people to East Lansing (besides MSU)	more convenient - other downtown - for -
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Identity (3)

The branding of the city is good, you always know when you are in the city.	Student culture	Around college campus
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Diversity (3)

Diverse	Diverse city	Veterans due to the campus. you get to ... people from all over
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Entertainment (2)

I like that it's so big there's always something to do	Community Events
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Community (3)

Growing community	Community	Community Sign
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Economic Opportunity

Post-grad jobs(3)

Not a lot of options.	Some post grad job opportunities are minimal	There are a lot of jobs for people who are not in the field of study.
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Undergrad jobs (7)

A lot of job opportunities	Job opportunities	Since East Lansing is a college town there are a lot of minimum job opportunities
Lot of job opportunities	Access to employment opportunities, including in Lansing	Plenty of restaurant and job opportunities
		Job Opportunities

Undergrad jobs (4)

More job opportunities for students	We could use job opportunities and the city could use a job fair.	More applicable job Opportunities for students	You can make some improvement on the amount and
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Environment & Greenspace

Built Environment (4)

New building designs of EL -nlce, but a lot of the olhenaNnot	Uniform buildings /lack of variation	Malleh Campus acldtl-10 theOriginal .-hetic/ brandofMSU	DM•lon-parking garage ugly
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Recreation (3)

City could plan...nts at palband , -tional centar	No , -tional activlti•	New skatepark
---	------------------------	---------------

Greenery & Greenspace (3)

Add more trNs downtown.	Not very SINNIll (need more vegetation)	Plant stuff, gardens need Imp-nt
Sitting Water/ run off	Too much noi'se	a.- construction
		Smell from whicles and roadways.

Blight/Nuisances (4)

Built Environment (7)

Fireplace downtown	Albert Ave Plaza	I ...lylik-e the downtown lsNally ...oglc&many optionsof businesses
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I like the buildings h... very structured

Like the design of the city

Layout of city

Distinct campus • East Lansing border

Greenery & Greenspace (9)

Trails	Access to greenspace	Many farm lands	Good amount of natural areas north of campus.
Parks	We really like the parks	Riverwalk	good design of green/open space
		Greenery	



Housing

Affordable Housing (10)

Affordable Housing	Housing affordability	Apartments are expensive	Need lower rent for students
More housing off campus to make it less expensive	Need more easy housing for students	The rent is too high!!!	Lower the rent plz
Cheaper Housing	Affordable housing		

Location (4)

Student rental houses near campus	good locations	Concentrated housing/In close proximity	Housing options pretty much anywhere you want.
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Zoning (1)

Variety (1)

Clodd zoning for both houses and apartments

Wide variety of apartments

Quality (4)

1110 - 1111 YR, the pr1 ..... lot fwNntendget - 9 -	Outdated housing	Outdated buildings (lack of AC/ Heating)	become a historical landmark that - In the area in poor condition - they can't be
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Other (3)

DTN monopoly housing owner	Property value blocks people from buying homes than purchasing homes.	Not enough housing (need more multifamily housing)
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## Parking {16}

More free parking	More bike parking	Parking: an <del>be</del> a problem, especially around Grand Rivw	<b>Re-pave</b> roads and parking lots.	Parking	parking
More free parking	Cheaper parking tickets	Would like more parking or better bus service to remote lots	Parking sucks, especially near campus and on	The Nlanot enough <del>-parking</del> or -to park when	pic: I n gap food
chHper/frN forshort period parking	Parking should be <b>chHper</b> and more prominent.	more accessible parking for off-campus students	Add more roadside parking	Public parking -there Isa lack of free or conwnient parking In the city.	

## Bike transportation {3}

No <del>ke</del> lane on Grand River	bigger and more bike lanes	No <b>bike</b> lane on Grand River
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## Transportation and Mobility p2

## Bike Transportation {1}

Cood  
bike  
trails



## MISCELLANEOUS

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A lot of vacant  
lotsand  
.....GUIii  
byFtanllar  
lhllpFlntl  
centar



